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## BUCK TAYLOR THE COMANCHE CAPTIVE



EVERY BALL FOUND ITS TARGET IN EITHER MAN OR BEAST, FOR BUCK TAYLOR'S  
NERVES WERE AS STEADY AS STEEL.

OR,

### BUCKSKIN SAM to the RESCUE.

A Romance of Lone Star Heroes.

BY COL. PRENTISS INGRAHAM.

CHAPTER I.

THE RED-SKIN RAIDERS.

LIKE phantom horsemen, a large band of redskins looked, as they wound along a trail through the mountains, silent as specters, riding slowly in Indian file, and even the unshod hoofs of their ponies giving back no sound from the soft ground.

A hundred or more of them there were, and as their leader, a chief, reached the summit of a ridge, riding out of the darkness of the valley,



beyond, the moonlight fell full upon him, revealing his bronzed face in full war-paint, and his bonnet of eagle feathers swayed gracefully with the movements of his horse.

An instant he halted upon the ridge, and his dark eyes glanced over the miles of rolling prairie spread out before him, with here and there, afar off, the twinkle of a light in some settler's home.

Then over the ridge he rode, and following him came his braves, one and all of them, as they rode into the moonlight, showing that they were in full war-paint.

It was a band of Comanches, and they were upon the war-path.

They had ridden from their village away back in the mountains, to make a raid upon the settlements and ranches of their pale-face foes, to strike a quick, cruel blow against men, women and children alike, and to then raid their homes, escaping with what scalps, booty and prisoners they could get to the mountains while night yet covered up in part their red deeds.

There lay the unsuspecting settlements, miles away, and here and there was the home of a ranchero.

Cattle and horses by the hundreds were asleep upon the prairies, or grazing upon the rich grass, while about them the cowboy sentinels rode to keep them from straying, either whistling or singing to soothe the dumb beasts.\*

Down the steep hillside trail rode the Indian raiders, until at last the chief halted upon a knoll and called about him a group of warriors.

In a low tone he gave them certain orders, pointing here and there, and then he rode on, followed only by some thirty of his red horsemen.

As he held straight on to the trail, another chief rode away to the right with a score of braves at his back, and a third leader went off to the left with his force.

The reserve, some thirty in number, followed slowly upon the first chief's trail.

The moon had been up an hour now, the night was not yet old, and the intention was to strike by midnight, do the red work quickly and be well upon the retreat when dawn should come.

The leaders of the red raiders had their orders, one to strike the ranches far to the left, ranging toward the right, and the other to strike to the right ranging toward the left, while the head chief was to hit the settlement in the center. The reserve, an equal force with his own, was to follow and be ready to lend a helping hand to either of the three parties, or cover a retreat should the people be warned of their coming.

But down from the ridge ahead of the red raiders had come a horse and rider.

As he came from the shadows of the hills into the moonlight, it could be seen that his pony was staggering with fatigue, but still hard pressed by his rider, who was a youth yet in his teens—a youth clad in buckskin, wearing a belt of arms, having a rifle slung at his back, and who looked like a dangerous foe, young as he was.

His hair was long, and fell almost to his waist. His face was beardless and expressive of daring, resolution and utter fearlessness.

His form was tall, slender, but wiry and supple.

As he rode along he urged his tired horse harder and harder.

"It seems cruel, my good horse, to push you so, and I know you are doing your best; but then, the settlements must be warned that those red fiends are coming to raid them."

"Oh! that I had not had to make that long hard ride around the spur, for I would have been there now, and not have used you up; but, you must go until you drop, and then I must run the rest of the way, for the people must know their danger."

So again he urged on his utterly worn out horse, which at times staggered badly, as though he could not hold out much longer.

Just as the red-skins filed down from the range into the prairie, the poor animal, who had done his best, stumbled badly; then, unable to recover his feet, fell heavily and rolling over lay where he had fallen.

In an instant the rider had caught upon his feet, and with a word and caress to the poor horse, he sprung forward on foot in a long, swinging run.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE WARNING.

THE horseman, whose gallant horse had sunk under the terrible strain he had been put to,

\* The cowboys on guard at night sing, or whistle, to keep the cattle quiet. THE AUTHOR.

started off like a man who knew full well the responsibilities devolving upon him.

He knew that it was a hard run of miles to the nearest ranch; but, could he once reach there, then horsemen could be sent flying along the line of settlers' homes, and to the settlement, giving the alarm, and warning men to rally and defend their lives and property.

So he struck out at a pace swift and steady, fleetlier than his horse had carried him the last few miles of the trail.

He followed the trail, indistinct though it was in places, as a hound would a scent, and the moonlight showed that he was betraying no sign of his speed slackening, whatever fatigue he might feel.

Often he would turn his head and glance back over the moonlit prairie, and smile grimly as he saw no dark forms in chase.

He knew that his own life was at stake, too, as well as the lives of many others, for did the Indians come up with him it would be but a short stand at bay and then the end must come.

"I must warn the settlements of their danger, if I fall dead the moment I have done so," said the brave youth as he bounded along over the soft-turfed prairie.

At last he halted, and suddenly.

Had his strength failed him?

No, for he stood in a listening attitude, his hand to his ear, as sounds came to him from away back upon the prairie!

"They have found my horse and could not resist an outcry. Now they will press on in chase of me like hounds after a deer."

And away he bounded again, his speed increased considerably, and his body bent forward as he ran.

He tightened his belt, took off his huge Mexican spurs, threw his rifle across his shoulders, and with one hand on the stock, the other on the barrel, thus ran at a speed that was remarkable.

Only one of his sinewy, wiry frame could have endured the killing pace.

One, two, three miles had been passed over and still he kept up that terrible run.

At last, before him on the prairie, a dark object arose.

"It is a cowboy sentinel. Thank God! I am in time!" he panted.

The horseman suddenly heard a hoarse call that startled him:

"Pard! quick! Ride toward me!"

He saw a running form and obeyed.

"The Indians are coming—not a mile behind me—ride with all speed—and—warn the ranches and settlements."

"Go! don't lose a minute!"

"Ha! it is you, Buck Taylor, and you are utterly played out, pard. Take my horse, and—"

"No, no, I am too dead beat even to ride. I'll get off the—trail, out of their way. For God's sake—go!"

"There are over a hundred—of them—"

"Go!"

"I will, and you shall not be forgotten, Buck, for this brave work."

"Go off on the prairie yonder, away from the trail, and lie down flat."

"Oh, go! never mind me, Brent Baldwin!" and the words came as before, through the panting breath, in a painful way.

The horseman awaited no longer, but put spurs to his horse and darted away, while Buck Taylor turned, tottered, and fell right on the trail!

His strength had failed him and he could go no further!

But, he hoarsely whispered:

"Thank Heaven! I warned the ranches, for Brent Baldwin will ride like the wind."

He seemed now unable to move, and lay panting like a hound; but, at length, his breath came more evenly, his heart ceased its painful beating, and he rose to a sitting posture.

Then he glanced back over the trail he had come, eagerly searching for the coming red-skins.

He had not long to look, for there they were, a dark mass, moving at a canter along the trail. He knew that he was directly in their path, but, to have saved his life, before that moment, he could not have risen and walked away.

Now, however, his strength was rapidly coming back to him, and he rose to his knees, then to his feet.

He swayed an instant, and seemed about to fall again. His brain reeled and he felt strangely weak.

But in a moment the dizziness was gone, his nerve and strength came back to him, and he glided away over the prairie in a crouching position, his rifle in hand.

At first his knees swayed, but the muscles regained their action, and he was beginning to feel that he might get out of the track of the red-skins unseen, when he heard a low cry, followed by other exclamations, and as one man the Indian horsemen spurred toward him.

## CHAPTER III.

### AGAINST ODDS.

"THIS is luck!"

One who had heard Buck Taylor's words and not seen to what he referred, would have supposed that he considered it "luck" to have some thirty odd hostile Comanches riding down upon him.

But, instead, he had suddenly stepped into a hole in the prairie!

It had the appearance of being a grave, and such, indeed, it was.

But little earth had been thrown in upon the form resting there, and this had settled down firmly in the time that had passed since the occupant of the grave had been placed there.

The loose earth was packed up around the edge of the grave, which had clearly been dug by spades, and well dug, too, if it was left, from some reason, but half filled in.

It was some four feet deep, with the embankment of hardened earth around it rising a foot higher, so that a better place of defense could not be found.

Many would have regarded it as ominous, to thus fall into an open grave, and perhaps become unnerved by the thought that right there life would end; but not so with Buck Taylor, the young Cowboy Scout.

He congratulated himself upon his "find," as though he had "struck it rich," and recovering from his fall, braced himself to what was before him.

The Indians had come upon his horse miles back upon his trail, to find him dying from exhaustion. They had seen with experienced eyes that his rider had left him but a few moments before.

They knew that their coming had been seen—that the rider was going on to warn the settlements, and his horse failing him, he was in hiding upon one side of the trail, hoping for them to pass on.

The cunning chief at once decided to find the man they sought. If he had gone on afoot, then they could overtake him, for what mortal could keep up a run for miles against the hardened ponies? or, if he had gone off the trail to hide, then they must find him.

So the chief gave an order, and the warriors filed off in a straight line upon either side of him.

Thirty horsemen, separated by a hundred feet between each of them, extend a long distance, and so, had Buck Taylor simply left the trail to hide, he would have been readily found.

As the chief rode at a canter, a rapid one, too, for he wished to lose no time, his braves kept abreast of him.

Thus the line went on rapidly over the prairie, until at last the keen eyes of the leader discovered a dark object ahead.

It was the man they sought, and the warriors were at once called in toward a common center, from which they began to circle and surround their pale-face foe.

One thing pleased the Indians: they believed they had overtaken him before he had been able to warn the settlements.

They had no idea how rapidly he had run, and how much endurance he had shown.

Afar off on the prairies they saw a number of cattle, slowly drifting toward the ranch, yet in no apparent alarm.

If they could surround the man before them, then they might prevent any firing, which they wished to avoid; but, if he should fire upon them, their arrows would quickly end his life and silence him, when they could rush on to the attack for which they had come.

Such was the situation when Buck Taylor stood at bay in the half-open grave.

The red-skins, of course, did not know of this cover in the ground. They also were unaware of the range of his rifle, and just who their foe was.

Had they known him as a young cowboy who had already won a name as scout, guide, wild rider and Indian-fighter, they would have been more cautious.

From his point of vantage, in spite of the odds against him, Buck Taylor took the situation with the greatest coolness.

He saw the circle of death narrowing about him, and picked out his men to kill.

As he knelt down in the hole Buck raised his



rifle to begin the fight against the appalling odds.

The moon revealed the Indians distinctly, but his position in the grave allowed only his head and shoulders to be seen.

A moment more and his rifle spoke. The fine weapon was a repeater, and, quick as the trigger could be touched, shot after shot rung out, until seven had been told.

Nor had the muzzle pointed in one direction, for it had swept entirely around the circle, until it seemed as though half a dozen men were fighting from the grave.

Ponies went down, warriors fell from their saddles, and not a single shot had been lost. Every ball found its target in either man or beast, for Buck Taylor's nerves were as steady as steel.

The Comanches were startled, and for a few moments were dismayed; with wild yells they rushed upon their single foe.

But, he held a revolver in each hand now, and still kneeling in the grave, his hands extended right and left, his head turning quickly to aim first one, then the other weapon, Buck Taylor let fly his shots at the charging Comanche horsemen.

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### THE CHIEF'S RECOGNITION.

THE arrows flew in showers about the head of the heroic Texan, and the earthwork about the grave looked like a huge pin-cushion, as they stuck in it.

One had buried itself in his arm.

His revolvers were emptied, slowly, deliberately and with deadly aim; but, what could one man do against such odds?

Suddenly a loud voice rung out in an order, and the shower of arrows instantly ceased, and from all sides the Comanches rushed upon their foe.

Out of the grave sprung the tall, slender form, his rifle clubbed now, and it fell with crushing force upon a warrior's head.

Then his hand dropped upon his bowie-knife; but, ere he could use it, half a dozen red-skins had thrown themselves upon him.

He was even then able to hurl them right and left, by his wonderful strength; but, some were not to be thrown off, and after a desperate struggle he was borne down and quickly bound hand and foot.

The red-skins had obeyed their chief's command not to kill their foe.

His astonishing pluck and deadly aim had won their admiration, and such a man must die by torture, to see if he would still be as brave under their most inhuman cruelty, as when standing at bay and fighting them.

So the arrow sticking in his arm was pulled out, and as it was seen that his other wounds were slight, the red-skins seemed rejoiced that he had suffered no serious injury.

Their chief had dismounted and stood regarding the prisoner curiously.

At last he seemed to have made up his mind that he had seen the cowboy before and asked in perfect English:

"Are you not Buck Taylor?"

"I am, and you, from your speech, are a renegade white in Indian togs and war-paint, to your shame be it said," was the reply.

"Yes, I am a white man and a renegade."

"That is evident."

"We have met before?"

"Have we?"

"Yes, but as you do not recall me I shall not now make myself known to you."

"I ordered my warriors to cease firing upon you, and to run in and take you alive, for I admired your pluck. You have killed six of my braves and wounded several more, while under your deadly aim half a dozen of my ponies have gone down."

"But I want you, and I shall send you back under a guard, while I press on to strike a blow at the settlements and bring you more company."

"You mean prisoners?"

"Yes, I have a fair lady love from Mexico, who married an American officer, and I intend to make her my captive."

"Do you know the ranch of Captain Hassan?"

"Yes, though I do not know him."

"Well, you'll make his acquaintance soon in the Indian village up in the mountains," and turning to his warriors who had now grouped themselves about him, he gave orders that the dead should be packed upon ponies, the wounded also on their own horses, and with the prisoner, under two braves, should all go on the back trail to the mountains. When meeting the reserve they should be hastened on after the chief.

The order was promptly obeyed, and after a delay of hardly more than fifteen minutes, the chief rode on at a gallop with his diminished force, to begin his attack, fearful that the firing had put the ranches in hearing on their guard.

When met by the party returning with the prisoner and the wounded, the reserve learned that the chief and his braves had met with a check, at the hands of one man, then their prisoner. There was a desire to rush upon Buck and then and there to end his life; but the orders of the chief were made known, and the attempt abandoned, though the darkest of scowls and some severe blows were dealt the prisoner.

The Cowboy Scout uttered no remonstrance or outcry, but calmly and patiently bore the insults and added sufferings, for he did suffer from his wounds and the tight binding of the ropes.

So on went the party on the back trail, the pale-face alone knowing that the Comanches were going to meet a surprise where they hoped to surprise their foes.

At last the hills were reached, and as the party came to the summit of the ridge, where the chief had halted his warriors and viewed the prairie before them, with the far-off glimmer of a light here and there from a ranch, the brave who commanded the little force also came to a standstill.

He felt deep chagrin at having to retreat when his fellow warriors were going where scalps and plunder were plentiful.

As he glanced off over the prairie a bright light shot up, then another and another, and he gave a wild yell of triumph, for these told him that the chief had struck the settlements and had begun the red work of murder and destruction.

Yet, as all now looked there came to their ears a ringing volley of rifles, and Buck Taylor, bound as he was, burst in a shout of triumph, for it told him that the warning he had given had been promptly responded to.

#### CHAPTER V.

##### TWO PRISONERS.

THE triumphant cry of Buck Taylor, when he heard the rifle-shots, which told that the Comanches had met the rancheros in their raid, was received by the guards with angry words and gestures, which threatened him with death, but the prisoner knew that they dared not kill him, after the orders of their chief, and he felt no apprehension on that score.

They were savage, however, in their manner and words, for on the night air came to them the rattle of many shots, and the raid they had hoped would be such a successful one, they now dreaded might be a flight for their comrades, without plunder and scalps, and with the loss of many lives among their own number.

Buck Taylor understood the Comanche tongue pretty well, but this fact he kept to himself, though he heard the conversation about him.

He was glad to feel that the red-skins also knew that their comrades would not meet with the success they had anticipated, and their pushing on into the mountains convinced him that they feared the ranchero pursuit might be so hot as to endanger their retreat.

Until dawn they pushed on, and then coming to a halt, an Indian brave climbed a high tree and took a look back over the trail.

He soon made a discovery, for he called out to his companions that they must move on again, and the wounded warriors and prisoners were accordingly started once more on the march.

They had gone but a short distance when the brave who had climbed the tree overtook them, and said that two of the bands were returning, and both were being pursued.

On into the mountains they pressed, and soon after noon came in sight of the Comanche village.

Buck Taylor saw that it was the main village, from the number of tepees visible, and the crowds of warriors, squaws and children that came out to welcome their coming.

But for the words of the warriors with him, repeating the orders of their chief, he would have quickly been put to death, and as it was, received many a severe blow from a squaw or one of the children.

He bore the punishment without a word, and showed no evidence of the pain he suffered under the ordeal; but he was glad when he at last was put in the Council Lodge, under guard of two braves.

He had noticed that the village was splendidly located for defense, and retreat if necessary, and from what he heard among the warriors, he discovered that the raiders had been led by the

head chief of the tribe, whom he now knew to be a renegade white man.

He had heard of this chief, Ka-noon-ka, the Death Hand, as a savage-hearted man, with wonderful skill as a leader and desperate courage; but that he was a white man no one had suspected.

Now he knew that it was Ka-noon-ka, the renegade chief, who had captured him, and what the result would be he could only surmise, for the man had seemed to rejoice in his capture from some fell purpose he kept to himself.

As night drew near the shouts and cries in the village told the prisoner that the raiding party were returning, and he rolled over to the entrance of the large tepee to get a look at them and know if they came as victorious plunderers or defeated and in flight.

His guards made no effort to prevent his seeing, and this convinced him that one at least of the bands had met with success, for were it otherwise the two braves would have prevented his seeing the humiliation of their comrades.

Then, too, the words of the two Indians, who did not know that he spoke their language, soon told him that the raid had been, in a manner, successful.

Soon there came into sight the renegade chief, his horse's head hanging low from fatigue, his sides gaunt from his hard ride.

Behind him came a warrior, and by his side, mounted upon an Indian pony, was a young girl of scarcely more than ten years of age.

Even at the distance he was from her, Buck Taylor saw that her face was livid with fear, and that she glanced at the howling mob of red-skins with a dread of instant death being visited upon her.

Behind these came a score of warriors, each one of whom led a couple of horses, evidently captured animals, loaded down with plunder.

A herd of cattle, their tongues lolling out from the hard drive they had been forced upon, a drove of horses, a couple of hundred in number, and behind these mounted warriors formed the procession.

The braves from the village dashed out and drove the captured cattle and horses toward a valley beyond the village, while the animals loaded with plunder followed the chief toward his own tepee which was near the Council Lodge.

Then the eyes of Buck Taylor fell upon another party bringing up the rear, and he quickly saw that many a pony bore a rider, hanging limp across his saddle as he came along on his last ride, while upon the backs of other mustangs were two braves, one able-bodied, supporting a wounded comrade unable to keep his seat alone.

Quickly over the party of dead and wounded his eyes searched, and he gave a sigh of relief as the words came to his lips:

"Only two prisoners!"

"That poor little girl and myself."

#### CHAPTER VI.

##### THE MESSENGER.

I WILL now return to Brent Baldwin the cowboy guard whom Buck Taylor sent off upon his mission of warning the ranches and settlements.

He was well mounted and a plucky fellow, so he felt no fear of the result; but he was there to guard his employer's herd, and so just gave the cattle a start toward the distant ranch.

Then he went off like the wind and as he drew near the ranch he made known his coming with a well-known cry of alarm.

It was heard and heeded by them at the ranch, and as he rode up he called out:

"Men, Buck Taylor, the Wild Rider of the Rio, is back on the prairie dead beat, and he brings news of a large band of Comanches coming to strike the ranches."

"I started the cattle down the creek, and am now going along the line of ranches to give warning."

"Keep a sharp lookout for the reds, boys!"

With this he was gone, and he kept his spurs against the flanks of his horse, which ran with the speed of a deer.

As for the people at the ranch they hastily gathered a few provisions and wraps, mounted in hot haste, and while one man went with the women and children out of the path of the red-skins, the men began to keep a watch for the coming of their foes, so as to keep ahead of them, and just out of sight, so that they could fall back upon the force at the next ranch.

The messenger meanwhile had reached the next ranch and given the same warning, and all were prepared for the coming of the Comanches, those who could not defend themselves being



run off to a place of safety with the horses and cattle, while the men who could be spared waited the coming of those from the other ranch to add to their numbers of defenders.

To the third and fourth ranches went the flying messenger, mounting a fresh horse here as he reached the fifth, and coming suddenly upon a band of a dozen horsemen who had just come along the trail from the settlement.

A voice called out as he drew rein:

"Ho, Brent Baldwin, is that you?"

"It is for a fact, pard, and though I don't recognize you, right glad am I to meet you, for there is work to be done this night," answered Brent Baldwin.

"Well, my friend, what is wrong?" and a horseman rode forward to greet the messenger.

"I am cowboy on Lawler's Ranch, sir, and while minding my herd a couple of miles from the house, I saw a man running across the prairie toward me, and running like a deer.

"He was dead beat out, and could hardly speak, yet panted out that his horse had died back on the trail some miles, from hard riding, and he had run to give warning that the Comanches were moving upon the ranches with a large force of braves.

"I wanted him to take my horse, but he said he was too played out to hold in the saddle, so would camp off the trail and lie down to rest while I came on.

"You are Captain Hassan, are you not, sir?"

"Yes, and I congratulate you upon your rapid ride, and am glad we have met you here.

"We were returning from the settlement to my ranch, and I will send one of my men along the line of ranches to give warning, and another to the settlement, so you need not go further away from your people."

"I thank you, sir," answered Brent Baldwin, and Captain Hassan at once gave the orders that sent two of his men flying away at full speed.

He was a man of fine presence and military bearing, for he had only of late years resigned from the army and become a ranchero.

He still wore a half-military costume with his border dress, and had the air of one who was every inch a soldier.

Serving as surgeon of a fort on the Rio Grande, some years before, he had rescued a beautiful Mexican girl from a band of outlaws, and between the two had sprung up a love that ended in their marriage, after which Captain Hassan, as his cowboys called him, turned Texas ranchero, and was respected and liked by all who knew him.

He was now returning to his home from the settlements, where he had been with his cowboys to drive a herd of cattle, when he so fortunately came upon Brent Baldwin.

Learning that Cowboy Baldwin had warned the other ranches further along the frontier, and the men were falling back along the line toward where he was, Captain Hassan decided, as there was a mass of heavy timber just there, to make a stand against the Comanches, as with those coming and his own men he would have fully a score of gallant Texans to fight back the cruel foe with.

Then, too, he knew that his men sent as messengers would soon give the alarm, and when the firing was heard others would flock to his aid.

So he quickly ambushed his men in the timber, and hardly had they taken position when a red glare shot up into the skies back on the trail Cowboy Brent Baldwin had come, and all knew that the Comanches had begun their fiendish work, and the Texans bided their time for revenge.

#### CHAPTER VII. THE AMBUSH.

"WHO did you say the brave fellow was, Baldwin, who so nobly brought the warning of the coming of the Comanches?" asked Captain Hassan of Brent Baldwin, after the force from the deserted ranches had come up and joined his own, and they were lying in ambush in the timber awaiting to deal their blow against the coming foe.

"Buck Taylor, sir."

"I think I have heard of a youth of that name whose wonderful horsemanship has gained for him the name of Wild Rider."

"Yes, sir, he is known as the Wild Rider of the Rio Grande."

"Yes, I have heard of him; but who is he?"

"Well, Captain Hassan, all I know is that he is a Texas boy, and has been guide and hunter, as well as scout at some of the forts.

"He is a tall young fellow, quick as a tiger

and strong as a giant, and has not his equal as a rider in Texas, while he throws a lasso as straight as he shoots.

"I believe now he is a cowboy on a river ranch, and yet he spends most of his time scouting on his own hook, picking up stray cattle without brands and catching horses.

"He must have been scouting up near the Comanche country when he discovered their coming, and riding his horse to death came along on foot at a pace few men could equal and keep up as he did.

"I only hope he will not be pursued and captured."

"I sincerely hope so, indeed."

"Some of the men from Lawler's Ranch, Captain Hassan, said they heard sharp firing back on the prairie, after they left home," said a man near.

"Then the Comanches jumped Buck Taylor, and my word for it he made his mark before he went down," Brent Baldwin said.

The men who had heard the firing were sent for, and Captain Hassan questioned them about it.

"We had sent the women and children off down the creek, sir," was the reply, "while we fell back along the trail to Sutlow's Ranch, and heard back on the prairie some rapid firing, as from a repeating-rifle.

"We saw the flashes, too, now and then, and it seemed to be at or near the grave of a traitor guide, who was hung by the people of a wagon-train, a year ago, for trying to lead them into an Indian ambush.

"They but half-filled the grave in, and so left it, and if Buck Taylor found it and took shelter there, he had a good place to fight from at least, though of course he could not hold out against such odds."

Such was the explanation of the man from Lawler's Ranch, and all hoped that Buck Taylor had managed to stand off the Comanches, though they dreaded the worst that could befall him.

The burning of the Lawler Ranch cast a ruddy glare over the prairies, and they knew that the Comanches would hasten on as swiftly as they could, fearing to alarm the ranches.

In this they were right, for soon across the prairie a dark mass appeared in sight, and they were coming at a rapid canter.

"Stand ready, men!" ordered Captain Hassan, in his calm, soldierly way, and the cowboys grasped their rifles for the work in hand.

A few shots, from fugitive ranchmen, the Comanches might expect from the timber, and yet they would mostly believe that those who had deserted their homes had fled off the trail for safety.

But that there was a score of brave men barring their way they did not suspect, and as the Death Hand drew near the timber, through which the trail ran, and which the nature of the ground did not allow them to flank, he gave the order to his warriors for a rush, hoping to put to flight any two or three foes that might be hidden there, for the darkness in the woods was impenetrable, even to Comanche eyes.

"Aim to kill, men!"

"Throw no shot away!"

"Ready! aim! fire!"

So ordered Captain Hassan, and almost as one rifle the weapons flashed full in the faces of the red riders and their horses.

The shock was a withering one, and down before it went horses and braves, while the wild yell of the Texas cowboys showed the Comanches not only who they had to fight, but also that their force was a large one.

Death Hand, the chief, was unhurt, though in the lead, and he was not unnerved by the ambush and defeat of his hopes, for he knew that they dare not attempt to go on.

Behind him came his reserve at a run, for their yells were heard, and this alone prevented Captain Hassan from giving the order to charge out upon their foes after the volley that had been so disastrous.

He was sure that there were more Indians coming, that they had fired upon the advance guard only, and so they held their position in the timber, while the chief drew off his braves slowly and sullenly, unable to carry with them their dead or seriously wounded.

The reserve came up and a halt was made, while the chief held a consultation with his best warriors.

His keen hearing had detected no sounds of firing in the direction that his other two bands had gone, and he was cunning enough to say:

"Ka-noon-ka knew that we would have to do the fighting, and my other chiefs will have to reap the reward.

"We will hold these pale-faces here, so that they can not go after our braves up the line, and then we can cover their retreat, while we can drive back cattle and ponies with us.

"We have lost some of our braves, but the pale-faces shall suffer bitterly for the lives they have taken.

"Ka-noon-ka has said it."

#### CHAPTER VIII.

##### A COURIER'S TIDINGS.

THEIR great chief the Comanches implicitly trusted, and obeyed without a murmur.

He was a pale-face in blood, it was true, not of their race; but he had shown himself a "true Indian," and was as bitter a foe to his own people as the most savage warrior of their tribe.

He had led them to victory against the whites on several occasions, and against the Apaches often, and his word was law.

They deemed his words true, that he had gone to do the fighting while the other bands would get the plunder and scalps.

Yet, but for the warning of Buck Taylor this would not have been the case, as the reader knows, for each ranchero had thus been warned, up to where Captain Hassan and his cowboys were met, and but for their being halted and making a stand there, the Comanches would have swept onward upon the settlement and joined the other bands.

The cunning chief feeling that he could do nothing, in the way of going on, wisely determined to make a stand, to prevent his foes from going against his other bands, while, his reserve having come up, he had now enough warriors to remain, while he dispatched six or eight back over the trail to gather what plunder they could, and also drive back before them the horses and cattle they could manage in so rapid a retreat.

Not knowing the force of the enemy, Captain Hassan dared not leave the timber with his few men, and so remained in ambush, waiting for reinforcements.

But instead of the reinforcements expected, a horseman arrived riding at full speed, and his horse had evidently been pushed to the best he could do and endure.

"Is Captain Hassan here, pards?" he called out, as he dashed up to the timber.

"Yes—oh! it is you, Rawlings?" and the captain recognized one of his own cowboys, left on the ranch.

"Yes, captain, and I have bad news for you, sir," answered the cowboy, and his tone became low and sympathetic.

Captain Hassan started at these words, and his face blanched in the moonlight.

But he asked with perfect calmness:

"What is it, Rawlings?"

"You have had fighting here, sir, as I heard when coming along; but back at the ranch there were not enough to beat them off, sir, and they captured little Miss Belle and—"

"My poor, poor child! But my wife? Quick, Rawlings! tell me of my wife!"

"She fainted, sir, and I bore her off to safety; but I can give you no hope for Miss Belle, whether she be dead or alive, for the Comanches shot down several of our boys and some of the peon servants, and scalped them, while they either killed your daughter or carried her off with them.

"It was a complete surprise, sir, for they were upon us before we suspected that they were near, and there is another band which is also raiding the ranches above.

"They plundered your home, sir, and have gotten away with a dozen scalps and plenty of booty, and when they retreated I rode to meet you, as your wife was expecting you to return by morning."

"My poor, poor wife!"

"But she is safe?"

"Yes, sir."

"Where is she?"

"I carried her back to our camp, sir, and gave her to the keeping of all that remained of our cowboy band whom you left behind at the ranch."

"Then she is safe, though what fate has befallen my loved child, Heaven only knows.

"Come, men! with the Comanches divided, and other bands attacking the ranches above here, we need expect no aid, and that yonder force does not press on, shows that they are weak in numbers, so follow me, for I seek revenge."

The words were spoken in a calm tone, but all felt that a volcano was raging in the heart of the brave man who uttered them.

They dearly loved their ranchero chief and his beautiful wife, while the little Belle was their idol.



"Little Captain" they called her, and there was not one of the cowboy band that would not have offered his life freely to defend her from harm, or avenge her.

So a wild cheer greeted their leader's words, and they rallied quickly around him.

"Men, the Comanches are lurking yonder at that ranch, and we must charge them, opening with our rifles as we advance.

"When near enough, use your revolvers.

"Are you ready?"

The yell that answered this question in the affirmative was heard by the Comanches, and Chief Death Hand at once set it down that the cowboys had received reinforcements.

His warriors who had gone ahead would have had time to plunder the ranches and drive off the cattle, and the two bands sent further up the line had a much shorter distance to go than his party, so they had either met with success or defeat by that time, and he could only retreat, as he had no desire to fight a body of Texas cowboys that might nearly equal his own numbers.

So he gave the order to retreat just as the cowboys rode out of the timber to attack him.

He did not observe this fact until he had gotten some distance from the protection of the ranches, and a volley of rifle bullets began to patter about them.

To return to the shelter of the ranch was then impossible, so he could only keep up his retreat and make a running fight of it as best he could.

#### CHAPTER IX.

##### ON THE TRAIL OF RESCUE.

THE cowboys in the advance could see that the large dark mass in retreat over the prairie seemed to indicate that they were largely outnumbered; but had there been sunlight it would have revealed that there were fully a hundred riderless horses there, for the cunning renegade chief had kept the captured animals with him to have just this effect in the moonlight.

His braves were scattered among the captured horses, too, that the deception might the better be carried out, and so where he had only about two-score warriors, there appeared to be a couple of hundred of them as seen by the cowboys.

This sight naturally caused Captain Hassan to check the too rapid pursuit of his men, who he feared would be drawn into a trap.

As he did not know who the Comanche leader was, that he was a renegade white man, he had every reason to believe that the red-skins had not come upon a raid, to strike the ranches at selected points and make the attack seem general, without coming with a very large force.

So when they began to retreat he wisely determined to make a dash, fire a few volleys, at as close a range as possible, into their crowded ranks, and then halt to watch their movements, until they had gotten out of sight, when it would be well to sweep rapidly along the line of ranches to his own desolated and exposed home.

Because he had suffered perhaps most grievously of all, he was not one to leave undefended other ranches, until he was certain the Comanches' retreat was a real one and not a blind.

"Men, we will charge down upon them until I give the order to halt and fire, and then empty your rifles to a man.

"We will then make a stand to see if they continue their retreat; but if they press us, we can only fall back upon our frontier in the timber."

Such were Captain Hassan's orders, and the men answered with another ringing cheer.

A moment more and they were riding at full speed down upon the red-skins.

Astounded at their daring, Chief Death Hand feared that they had discovered the cheat, as to his pretended numbers, and he rallied his warriors to face the charge, which he considered was meant to break over them.

But suddenly a loud command was heard, and the cowboys halted and then came the order:

"Fire! and empty your rifles!"

For a couple of minutes the roar of the cowboys' rifles was heard, and the bullets fell thick and fast among the red-skins, dropping a warrior here, a horse there, and wounding others, though the distance was too great to do the damage that a few hundred feet nearer would have inflicted upon the red-skins.

The chief ordered his dead and wounded to be cared for, and, as he saw that the cowboys did not press him nearer, slowly continued to retreat.

Until the dark mass faded away in the distance over the prairie, and even the bright moonlight revealed them no longer to the keenest eyes, the cowboys remained in position.

Then feeling convinced that the retreat was a real one, Captain Hassan left Brent Baldwin with the men from the raided ranches, to remain in the timber to guard against a return of their red foes, while he pressed on with his own cowboy band toward his home.

A couple of ranches were reached, which the Indians had not visited, and then came the one nearest his own home.

It had not been set on fire, as the Comanches wished to conceal their red work as much as possible, but there lay half a dozen dead bodies about, the ranchero and his family, and from their heads the scalps had been ruthlessly torn.

"It was the first ranch they struck, sir, and they then swept down upon your house," said Rawlings.

Leaving a couple of men to guard the dead, and the utterly plundered house, Captain Hassan dashed on toward his own ranch some five miles distant.

He approached by way of his cowboys' camp, and these men, acting as a guard for Mrs. Hassan, greeted their arrival with a cheer of delight.

"My wife?" came in a hoarse whisper from the ranchero's lips, as he sprang from his horse.

"Is in the cabin there, sir, and suffers for her poor child," was the answer of a cowboy who wore his arm in a sling.

Into the cabin strode the captain, and with a cry of joy at his coming, of sorrow at their great loss, Mrs. Hassan sprang into his arms.

"My poor, poor wife! What have you not gone through?" he said in a low voice.

"Do not think of me, Ned, for I am safe, thanks to brave Rawlings and his hero comrades who rescued me; but our child, our beautiful Belle is either dead or a captive."

"I will at once give pursuit, Marion, so hope for the best, and the people of the other ranches will rally about me, while, as you are safe here, I will take every man I can spare."

"Yes, do not think of me, Ned, but go to the rescue of our child.

"Quick! lose not an instant of time," urged Marion Hassan, as she turned her lovely, tear-stained face up to her husband in urgent entreaty.

"I go at once, Marion," and with an embrace he left her, and loud rung his voice as he stepped from the cabin:

"Ho, men, rally about me, for I go to rescue my child from the red fiends!"

Ten minutes after, mounted upon fresh horses, Captain Hassan and a score of gallant cowboys were riding across the moonlit prairies on the trail of rescue and revenge.

#### CHAPTER X.

##### IN VAIN.

THE raid of the Comanches had been well-planned, and it showed good generalship in the renegade chief, Death Hand.

He had sent his warriors in two bands besides his own, and these had been directed to strike certain points of the line of ranches, to kill and to plunder, and then retreat toward a common center.

His own band had been intended for the settlement, where there were a few stores and a number of small farms, and there were the outlying ranches to be taken in on the way.

He had wisely had the reserve force follow him, and well for him it was that he had done so, or the cowboys, under Captain Hassan, would have wiped out his little band, thinned by its attack on Buck Taylor, and the volley from the timber, as it was.

The warning given by Buck Taylor, therefore, had saved the settlement and its surrounding ranches from a complete surprise and destruction.

But the two other bands had made a complete sweep of the ranches they had gone to plunder and destroy.

Except that they did not burn, not wishing to attract attention, their fiendish work had been complete, and they had escaped with their booty, horses and cattle, while at their belts hung a number of scalps, torn from the heads of men, women and children without mercy.

So it was that the renegade had planned well, for being a white man he had known the ways of his people, and a dweller among the Indians he had learned all their cruelties and cunning ways.

The ranch people had fled in terror, as they could escape, and were lying in hiding when a horseman dashed along calling for all men able to mount and pursue to do so, to follow on the trail of Captain Hassan and his band of cowboys.

The latter pushed on as rapidly as possible,

and when they camped at dawn for needed rest and food, as the sun rose over the prairie, afar off they beheld a body of horsemen following.

The cowboys gave three cheers at the sight, and awaited their coming, cooking for them extra food.

They soon came up, a hastily gathered band of men, twenty in number, with haggard faces, but wearing a look of determined revenge.

Some had lost dear ones, and nearly all had had their houses plundered by the marauding band of Comanches.

With nearly half a hundred brave, determined followers, ranging from boys of fourteen to gray-haired men of three-score years, Captain Hassan pressed on toward the mountains, hoping to overtake the retreating red-skins, for, loaded down as they were with plunder, he knew that they could not travel fast.

The trails of the cattle and horses showed that they had driven off many a fat steer and valuable animal, and they could not make rapid time thus hampered.

From all with whom he talked, Captain Hassan felt convinced that the band of marauders had been a small one, one which, had their coming been known, could have been handled without difficulty, had the ranch people been able to rally to beat them back.

At last the foot-hills were reached and scouts were sent on ahead to reconnoiter, for an ambush was feared, and justly so, for the able chief who had so well planned his raid could certainly understand how to protect his retreat.

"They are in yonder pass, captain," said Rawlings, pointing as he spoke to a canyon that entered the mountains, and where there was a chance for the red-skins to lie in hiding, their presence completely hidden from any one approaching from the prairies.

"There is but one way to find out, Rawlings," said Captain Hassan.

"Yes, sir?" the cowboy asked inquiringly.

"We must approach even within range of their fire, then halt, and all of us open with our rifles upon the rocks and bushes.

"It will be random shooting, but some shots will tell, and they will force the red-skins to show themselves without doubt."

This plan was adopted, and the horsemen rode up within easy range of the rocky pass.

They knew that the Indians, if there, would not fire, as long as there was a chance of their foes coming on into their ambush.

But suddenly the little band halted, their rifles went up to their shoulders, and half a hundred rifles flashed almost together, and a rapid rattling fire was kept up for half a minute.

The result of this plan was just what Captain Hassan had expected it would be, for wild yells came from among the rocks, and bounding forms seeking better shelter were seen.

Then came the order to advance, firing, but it was almost instantly countermanded as Captain Hassan saw that the red-skins were only temporarily stampeded, and others, already mounted and back in the pass, were coming forward to resist the advance of their pale-face foes further into the mountains.

As the Indians now charged up in force, Captain Hassan felt that it would be sheer madness to throw his men against the pass, for reinforcements could be rapidly brought from their village.

They had escaped to their stronghold, far back in the mountains, with what prisoners they might have, their plunder and captured horses and cattle, and to follow them with hope of success, even with a regiment of soldiers, would be in vain.

Seeing this, and knowing how sadly the men were needed back at the desolated ranches, Captain Hassan gave the order to retreat.

#### CHAPTER XI.

##### DEAD, OR WORSE.

THE party of cowboys, under command of Captain Hassan, were all brought in for consultation, as to what was best to be done.

Though commander, and knowing that his men would implicitly obey him, Captain Hassan was anxious to learn how each and all felt upon the situation.

When he told them that it would be utter madness for them to continue on into the mountains, even with ten times their force, they, to a man, agreed with him, and so it was that the back trail was taken.

If a prisoner, little Belle Hassan could not be rescued by force, that was certain, and if dead, she could only be avenged in time.

The trail taken back was the one which Chief Ka-noon-ka had gone on his way to the settlements.



The captain wished to discover just how far the Comanche raid had gone, and all the damage done.

When they arrived near the first ranch which had been sacked, and set on fire, they saw a party of horsemen grouped together on the prairie.

Among them was recognized Brent Baldwin, the cowboy whom Buck Taylor had first come up with, and who had been in time to give some warning at least of the coming raiders.

They were discussing some matter of importance, it seemed, when the Cowboy Rangers came in sight, and greeted their coming with a cheer.

Riding forward and meeting them, Brent Baldwin called out:

"We are glad to see you, Captain Hassan, and were waiting for others to come, to go on to your support, for we feared you would get into trouble, sir."

"Yes, and I thank you, Baldwin; but we decided to return and go over the track of the Comanches, as the men are sadly needed at the ranches."

"But your friends, there, are about a grave, I see, and there are a number of dead horses about?"

"Yes, Captain Hassan, the grave is an old one and was never quite filled in, and in it Buck Taylor took refuge, after he had sent me to warn the settlements, sir."

"He seems to have done good work, to look at the Indian ponies lying dead about."

"Yes, sir, and he doubtless brought down as many riders as horses before they captured him."

"Then he was captured?"

"Either killed or captured, sir; but I lean toward the latter as his body is nowhere to be found."

"The Comanches he killed were carried off, of course, and he was carried away a prisoner, or I at least hope so."

"Death would be preferable."

"Not with Buck Taylor, sir, for he is a man to escape, if there is a shadow of a chance for him to do so."

"Well, with such a man a prisoner, or rather youth, for I hear he is very young, I shall feel the better if my darling child is a captive among those fiends."

"Yes, he stood in the grave there and made his fight, and from the arrows sticking about he made a good stand-off, and I only hope was not killed."

The cowboys all now gathered about the grave, and talking earnestly over the signs as they read them, came to the conclusion that Buck Taylor had made a grand fight of it.

Then the Ranger Cowboys, under Captain Hassan, rode on their way, halting only when they came to the timber where they had ambushed the Indians.

A short halt only was made here, and as the people of the ranches were returning to their plundered homes, the captain suggested that a sentinel should be kept on duty night and day, as the Comanches might make another dash upon the settlements, trusting to the confusion existing to meet with success.

On then went the cowboy band, and by nightfall they came to the home of the captain.

Poor Mrs. Hassan was keeping up bravely, and had directed the people in getting things to rights again; but it could be seen that she hoped for the coming back of her little daughter with the rangers.

"Did you not find her?" she asked in a low, quivering voice as her husband came toward her.

"No, my dear Marion, we had so small a force we dared not follow them to their stronghold."

"My poor, poor, child is dead?"

"No, no, I think not, though she is a prisoner, I feel assured."

"She and one other, a daring youth who gave the warning of the coming of the Comanches, are all that I can learn who are prisoners, and I feel hopeful to know that Buck Taylor will be near my child, if both are in the power of the red-skins."

"There are others who suffered far more cruelly than we have, though of course, Belle was our only child."

"Bear up, bravely, my noble wife, for I shall not rest until I know the fate of our little girl, and avenge the work the Comanches have been guilty of."

"Yes, dead or worse, she shall be avenged," said Mrs. Hassan earnestly, her Mexican blood aroused to resentment at her terrible affliction.

## CHAPTER XII.

### A LOVER'S VOW.

THE scene goes back seven years, to a happy home in Mexico, where dwelt a wealthy Mexican, and his son and daughter.

Senor Inglis was the owner of a grand hacienda and large ranch, counting his horses and cattle by thousands, and lived in the greatest luxury, with half a hundred peon servants to obey his bidding.

His son, Ignacio, was a handsome young man, a trifle wild, however, who had been sent to the United States to receive his education, while his daughter, some five years the junior of her brother, was a beautiful maiden of sixteen, at the time she is presented to the reader.

Marion Inglis received her education at home, being under the care of a governess, and thus she was constantly with her father, whose idol she was.

When Ignacio returned to Mexico, after receiving his education in the States, he was accompanied by a young American whom he had met and become friends with.

The truth was, Ignacio owed his life to Richard Drummond, who saved him from drowning one day when they were bathing in the sea.

From that day the two became devoted friends, and Richard Drummond accompanied the Mexican to his home.

What Drummond did for a living no one seemed to know, and he was said to be rich; but Ignacio Inglis was well aware that his friend lived by gambling alone, but this secret he kept to himself.

In fact, when he invited him to his home, the Mexican owed the American a very large gambling debt.

A splendidly-formed, handsome fellow, well educated and courtly, while also reputed to be rich, not to speak of his having saved Ignacio's life, Dick Drummond, as he was familiarly called, was most warmly welcomed at the Mexican hacienda.

He was some years the senior of Ignacio, and seemed to possess over him a wonderful influence.

He was charmed with Marion at first sight, as she appeared to be with him, and when he retired to his room the first night of his stay beneath the hospitable roof, he said to himself:

"I must possess all this wealth by fair or foul means."

"Yes, if I have to get rid of those in the way and marry the fair Marion."

"This is the chance of my life."

These words show the character of the man whom Ignacio Inglis had taken to his home.

He knew his powers of fascination, his strength for accomplishing a purpose upon which he had set his mind, and he felt that there would be no drawback to his success.

Senor Inglis, ever hospitable, generous and courtly, welcomed the man who had saved his loved son from a grave in the sea, with all the warmth of his nature.

He did all in his power to entertain him, for there were rides, drives, hunting and fishing parties, entertainments, and all to make the guest spend an enjoyable time.

The senor was fond of a game of cards, and he soon found that Richard Drummond was an expert player: such an expert, in fact, that he soon had many thousands of the Mexican's money.

Marion was not, as Richard Drummond had hoped and believed she would be, so deeply impressed with the stranger.

She thought him very handsome, most agreeable, and enjoyed his society; but, young as she was, she recognized in him something that she dared not trust.

She would not admit a love for him.

This angered the man, and he determined to win her in spite of herself.

Steadily he won from the Mexican ranchero, until at last the large bank account was depleted and the senor had to give his notes, as had also Ignacio, his son, added to his indebtedness to their guest.

Then came the avowal of love to Marion, her refusal, and next the demand of Richard Drummond upon her father to force her to become his wife.

The poor Mexican was in despair, and urged his daughter to consent to save them all from financial ruin.

But Senorita Marion remained firm in her resolve, and at last her brother stood by her in her refusal.

The result was that Dick Drummond left the hacienda vowing vengeance, and he carried with him a large sum in money won from the Mexi-

cans, father and son, and notes of hand of value covering nearly half the estate.

As these notes drew near maturity the Mexican ranchero was nearly beside himself with rage and despair, for to sacrifice his property to pay them would be to ruin his own and his children's fortune irrevocably.

At last Ignacio Inglis, seeing his father's despair, determined to act, and so went to visit the American, who, through him, had brought so much of sorrow upon them.

He found him alone in his rooms, and at once demanded that he renew the notes for a term of years, which would enable his father and himself to thus save themselves from financial wreck.

The answer came in the low, decided tone of the American:

"I hold notes due within a couple of weeks, Ignacio Inglis, for a sum equaling nearly your father's entire fortune, and I will surrender them to your sister the moment she becomes my wife."

"If she refuses, then the crash must fall upon all of you, and this I most solemnly vow."

"Now, sir, you know my terms."

## CHAPTER XIII.

### A LIFE FOR A FORTUNE.

IGNACIO INGLIS returned to his home and made known the result of his visit to Dick Drummond.

They talked over the matter for a long while, and at last, assured that the American would keep his vow, Senor Inglis decided to place the situation fully before his daughter and see what she would say.

As he regarded it, Dick Drummond was a handsome, courtly fellow, an adept at cards, a gentleman, and one who loved Marion to an extent that he was determined to make her his wife.

Why she did not love him the senor could not understand.

The result was that he told Marion all, and added:

"Now, my child, he loves you devotedly, he is not a bad fellow, and will make you a good husband."

"If you refuse, then we are utterly ruined."

"What do you say?"

Marion Inglis seemed most deeply moved.

She did not love the man, for she had a *beau ideal* in her heart which he did not come up to in any way.

But her father was growing old, and she dearly loved him and her handsome brother, and so she consented to the sacrifice.

But Ignacio Inglis saw deeper than did his father how deep it cut Marion to sacrifice herself, and he declared in his own mind that it should not be.

So he again visited the American and told him frankly that though Marion had consented to wed him to save their fortune, *he refused* to let her be a victim, and furthermore added:

"You will either extend those notes for several years, or you shall face me in the *duello*."

"I prefer the latter," was the cool reply.

"So be it; my friend shall wait upon you at once," and Ignacio left the rooms of his one-time friend.

Across the Rio Grande was a fort, on the American side of the river, and there stationed was an officer who had been most friendly with the young Mexican, when the two had met some time before in New Orleans.

To this friend Ignacio Inglis now went, and explained the whole situation.

The American listened most attentively and then asked:

"What did you say his name was?"

"Richard Drummond."

"I know a man by that name, and he was once an army officer, belonging to my regiment."

"He was an expert in cards, and was forced to leave the service because it was believed that he cheated, though we had no proof then."

"Afterward, when he was gone, we had all the proof we wished, so I may be able to force him to give you back the notes."

"If you can do so, my dear friend Hassan, you will save us from ruin," was the answer.

"If he refuses, then I am to challenge him for you?"

"Yes, senor."

"I understand," was the response, and that evening Dick Drummond was surprised by the entrance into his rooms of one whom he had met before.

"I did not send my card, Drummond, knowing that you would not receive me; but I am here about an affair such as necessitated your



leaving my regiment some years ago, for it seems you have been again showing your expertness at cards, or in other words, hold the notes of Senor Inglis and his son for large sums which I can swear you did not squarely win."

Dick Drummond's face turned deadly pale, but he answered coolly:

"See here, Surgeon Ed Hassan, I am not to be insulted by you with impunity."

"If you come as Ignacio Inglis's friend, to arrange a meeting, I am willing to receive you, after which I shall hold you answerable for your words just spoken."

"I am here to demand the surrender of those notes, which you gained by fraud."

"Well, I refuse to give them up."

"What then?"

"Simply that I shall show certain proofs of your acts of fraud in the past."

"We are in Mexico now, and American law does not reach my case."

"You can go."

"You refuse to give up the notes?"

"Yes."

"Then I am here as the friend of Senor Ignacio Inglis to challenge you to meet him on the field."

"With pleasure; but let me call my friend."

He stepped to the door of an adjoining room and called in a Mexican officer of Lanceros.

"Captain Valdez, this gentleman is Senor Surgeon Hassan of the United States Army, and he bears a challenge to me from Senor Ignacio Inglis."

"Kindly arrange for a meeting, with weapons, place, and time to suit this gentleman, for I have no choice."

Captain Valdez showed no surprise, bowed to Surgeon Hassan, and the two talked together for some time.

Then the American officer departed, and returning to Ignacio Inglis, said:

"He refused to give up the notes, for here American law would not reach him, and so I arranged for a meeting to-morrow afternoon at the old Reno fort, an hour before sunset, and the weapons are to be revolvers at ten paces."

"I am content; but if I fall he will even then ruin my poor father."

"He has demanded a meeting with me afterward, and it may be that he may not live to collect those notes."

"Heaven grant it; but you have been drawn into this from friendship to me! and—but never mind, I will meet him."

And as Ignacio Inglis rode slowly homeward that afternoon he muttered to himself:

"No, no, my brave American friend must not fall by his hand."

"Dick Drummond saved my life, but now for him I must hold no mercy."

"It is his life against our fortune."

#### CHAPTER XIV.

##### THE DUEL.

THE meeting place was an old ruin, while about it were a number of graves, strangely and weirdly suggestive of death.

At the appointed hour four horsemen were riding toward the spot, but they were following two different trails, for Dick Drummond and his second, Captain Valdez rode out from the neighboring town where the American was stopping, while the young ranchero and his second, Surgeon Hassan, came by the trail from the Rio Grande.

They reached the spot together almost, and coldly saluting, they dismounted, hitched their horses and the two seconds walked apart to arrange the preliminaries.

This was soon done, the men were placed ten paces apart, the revolvers handed to them, and Surgeon Hassan, who had won the word, uttered the ominous words as the principals, calm and determined, faced each other, and which must usher a human life into eternity:

"Senors, are you ready?"

"Si, senor," promptly responded the Mexican, while the American said, sharply:

"Yer."

"Fire!"

"One—two—"

The weapons rose together to a level, there were two sharp reports, almost simultaneous, and the Mexican, Ignacio Inglis, dropped dead in his tracks.

The face of Surgeon Hassan turned very white as he rose from the side of his friend with the remark:

"He is dead."

"I shot to kill," was the cool reply of Dick Drummond, and he was turning upon his heel when the surgeon said sternly, an angry light in his eyes:

"I believe you considered yourself insulted by me, Mr. Drummond, when I called upon you at your rooms?"

"Ah, yes, I had forgotten, and I said I would hold you responsible?"

"Yes, and I am very much at your service, permit me to say, as I waive the fact that you are a card-sharp, and hence not a gentleman."

"I should think the fate of your friend would deter you from a desire to share his fate."

"Oh, no; his fate only urges me to avenge him."

"Well, send your friend to Captain Valdez when you will, for I am ready any time."

"Pardon me, but there is no time like the present, for you might run away, you know, and I know Captain Valdez to be a gentleman, though caught in your bad company, Richard Drummond, so I will ask him to act for me as well as you, and this little matter can be settled now and here."

It was very evident that Surgeon Hassan intended to bring Dick Drummond to terms, and he seemed not in the least disconcerted by the death of his friend.

"Captain Valdez, may I ask your good services in my behalf," and the American officer turned courteously toward the Mexican Captain of Lanceros.

"I will act for you if you desire, senor, but it seems a little irregular, and I would prefer to postpone the meeting so that you can have a friend, though I thank you for your confidence in me."

"I request of you the favor, senor."

"Then I will act for you as well as for my friend Senor Drummond."

"Shall the weapons be the same?"

Before reply could be made, over the ruined wall near by peered half a dozen carbines, and a voice called out in Spanish:

"Hands up, senors! for you are our game!"

"The Brigands!" ejaculated Captain Valdez, and he grasped Dick Drummond by the arm, as he saw him drop his hand to his hip with the remark:

"Don't be a fool!"

"They are merciless and we are in their power!"

"Hands up, or die!" came the command, sharply repeated, and though a brave man Captain Valdez hastily obeyed, while he said:

"Take my advice and do likewise."

The two Americans, Dick Drummond and Surgeon Hassan obeyed, though the former uttered a little oath.

"Men, kill the man who offers any resistance," said the outlaw leader, and he sprung over the wall and advanced toward the three prisoners, while his men kept their carbines covering them.

He was a rough-looking specimen, half bandit, half *vaquero*, and came on with his revolver in hand.

"Senors, you have been killing each other, I see, and were getting ready to keep up the red work when I broke in upon your little game."

"But I am not half so cruel, for I will not deal in lead or steel, unless you force me to it, but in gold."

"You see we are poor men and must borrow from the rich."

"Your purses, senors, please."

With an oath Dick Drummond tossed a well-filled pocketbook upon the ground.

"You, Senor Captain?"

Valdez did the same and then the robber turned to Surgeon Hassan who handed over some American money.

"Now, senor, your watch and jewelry?" and the robber again turned to Dick Drummond, who half refused and seemed about to resist when the man called out:

"Let this man have it if he refuses my commands."

"Yes, senor," came in a chorus of voices, and with bitter denunciations Dick Drummond handed over his watch and the elegant jewelry he wore as though it cut him to the heart to give up the costly trinkets.

"Now yours, senors," and the other two were likewise robbed.

"Now, senors, I must search you for the valuables you are holding back," coolly said the robber leader, and he turned first to Dick Drummond.

#### CHAPTER XV.

##### A STRANGE ROBBER.

DICK DRUMMOND grew violent at this last demand of the robber leader upon him, and with an oath said that he would resist.

But a shot from over the wall cut through the

the hood sombrero he wore, and he heard the words:

"That, as a hint, senor."

He saw that those robbers were not to be trifled with, so he said:

"I have only some private papers, of no use except to myself, and yet to me they are valuable."

"Let me keep them and I will give an order on my bankers for as much in money as that which you have already robbed me of."

"No, senor, I want the papers, for if worth so much to you they may be equally as valuable to me."

"Out with them!"

Threats, bribes and entreaties were unavailing, for the robber leader was determined, and calling two of his men to his aid, searched each one of the prisoners thoroughly.

Upon Dick Drummond in a buckskin vest, were found several pockets, and from these, papers were taken which the robber coolly appropriated.

Upon the Mexican captain and American surgeon nothing more was found.

"Now, senors, I shall prevent more bloodshed by removing your weapons out of reach, for I claim those too, and you may consider yourselves lucky that I do not take your horses."

"Adios, senors, and accept my thanks."

The robbers retreated behind the walls and disappeared, while, with a little denunciation of them, Dick Drummond said:

"Come, Valdez, we must get to your regiment as soon as possible, for those men must be overtaken, as they have robbed me of a large fortune in those papers."

"Another time, Surgeon Hassan, I will be at your service, but now we leave you with your dead friend."

He strode rapidly toward his horse as he spoke, and after a word of farewell, and regret at leaving him alone with the body of Ignacio Inglis, Captain Valdez turned to go.

Then he called out:

"It will be better for you to remain here, senor, for I will send you aid within an hour and a half at furthest."

"Thank you, senor; I will then remain with the body of my friend," was the response, and Captain Valdez followed Dick Drummond at a gallop.

They had hardly disappeared from sight when suddenly over the wall sprang the robber leader again.

"Do not fear me now, senor, for I am more your friend than foe."

Edward Hassan gazed at the Mexican robber in surprise, and he continued:

"You see, senor, I am not so bad as I seem."

"Years ago, young Senor Inglis, lying there, saved me from the Vigilantes, and though I have been a bad man he never did aught to harm me."

"This morning he met me, told me he was to fight a duel, and that if he was killed, the man who took his life would fight you, and perhaps kill you, too."

"So he asked me to prevent it, and more: to get from his slayer some papers which I was to hand to you, with the request that you would give them to his father."

"Here they are, senor, and here is your purse, watch, and all else I took from you."

"What I secured from the American gambler and Mexican captain, senor, I shall keep, for robbing is my trade."

"Good-night, senor, for I must be off, and I would say to you to hide the fact that you got your valuables back and the papers from the American gambler."

"Adios, senor."

Without another word the robber leader, who had handed over the papers taken from Dick Drummond, and all that he had robbed Surgeon Hassan of, turned quickly on his heel, sprung over the wall and disappeared.

In vain did Captain Hassan call to him to return, for he refused, and was lost sight of in the gathering gloom, for night was now coming on.

The moon soon rose, and the spot with its ruin, its graves and the dead body of Ignacio Inglis looked very desolate and lonely indeed.

But at last the sound of hoofs broke the stillness of the night, and there soon appeared coming up the hill an army ambulance, escorted by half a dozen soldiers.

The non-commissioned officer in charge reported to Surgeon Hassan, saying he had orders to escort the body of the young ranchero to his home.

Then Surgeon Hassan rode on ahead, and arriving at the grand old home some distance



in advance of the body, he broke the news to the ranchero and his daughter of the sad end of the son and brother.

He also delivered to the ranchero the papers handed to him by the robber leader, and they proved to be the notes which Dick Drummond held of the father and son.

"As he was a card-sharp, senior, and surely cheated you, under the circumstances too of their coming into your possession, I would not hesitate to take them," kindly urged Edward Hassan, as he handed the ranchero over the papers which to him was a fortune.

As duty demanded his immediate return to the fort, Surgeon Hassan started upon his way, leaving the father and sister with their dead, and determined, when he gazed upon their deep sorrow, if Richard Drummond pressed the meeting with him, he would do all in his power to avenge the death of the young Mexican.

#### CHAPTER XVI. THE RESCUE.

THE death of Ignacio Inglis at the hands of the man who had come to Mexico as his guest, his friend, created a very bitter feeling against him, and men began to feel that the American gambler had taken the life of the young Mexican to cover up some of his own evil deeds in which he had been discovered.

That beautiful Marion Inglis might also have been the cause of the affair, was believed by many, and so it was that Richard Drummond found himself hated and shunned.

He, therefore, having been robbed of the notes he held of the ranchero and his dead son, decided to go to the City of Mexico, and carry on his career as a gambler, intending to bide his time when he could act to get Marion Inglis into his power.

But he had not been long in the City of Mexico, when, as a stranger, he was inveigled into a conspiracy, from which he hoped to reap most liberal rewards.

But his hopes soon came to naught, as the conspirators were discovered, and Dick Drummond, with half a dozen others, were seized and thrown into prison, to await their execution.

But the American was a bold plotter, and he planned the escape of his fellow-prisoners, and carried out his plot so well that all got away, though they had to take the lives of two of the guards to do so.

A fugitive from justice from the United States, as he was found to be, and again from Mexico, Dick Drummond leagued himself with outlaws and infested the trails leading to the mines and traveled by richly-laden wagon-trains.

His appearance, his magnetism and courage, with his ability to plan and execute, soon made him an officer of the outlaw band, and he eventually became the chief.

As such he saw riches and revenge before him, and he began to plot to get Marion Inglis into his power and force her to become his wife.

His vanity was such that he believed if she did wed him, he could cause her to forget that her brother died by his hand, and as his wife she would learn to love him, and eventually all of her inheritance would be his, for her father should not long stand in the way.

Thus had he still in his heart his desire to possess the Inglis riches, and win lovely Marion as his bride.

When he got ready to carry out his plans, he plotted well.

First, he established a small, but pleasant ranch in Texas, and placed there a couple of cowboys and a servant.

This was supposed to be his home, and he would have a place to retreat to.

Then he plotted an attack at midnight upon the Inglis Hacienda, the plundering of it and carrying off of Marion.

He was not to be known in this midnight marauding expedition, but when the men he had selected from his band to do the work, he to be along completely disguised, should reach the Texan shores, he with a couple of his men were to dash in and effect what was intended should appear to the captive as a rescue of her.

The attack upon the hacienda was so well planned that it went off just as he had intended it should.

The place was surprised, the cattlemen and servants were shot down, the hacienda was plundered, and while Senor Inglis was wounded and left for dead, his daughter was carried off in triumph.

The river was reached and the bogus rescue was carried out; but a party of United States Cavalry were discovered, and Dick Drummond had no desire to check their path, so rode off at

full speed with his captive, keeping his men with him.

The cavalry pursued, for the officer in command saw with the aid of his glass that there was a feminine captive along, and a running fight occurred.

The Americans fired with the greatest caution, and slowly; but one shot brought a man from his horse and when they came up they found him dying.

"You speak their lingo, Hassan, so talk to the fellow?" said the captain in command of the cavalry.

The one he addressed was indeed Surgeon Hassan, and he quickly held a few words with the dying Mexican.

The soldiers saw him start as he listened to the words of the Mexican, and then he said quickly:

"Captain Driggs, leave several men with this poor devil until he dies, for we must push on, as he has confessed that the man ahead is Diablo Dick, the American chief of the Mexican band of outlaws we have heard so much of.

"He also tells me that he last night raided the hacienda of Senor Inglis, and kidnapped his daughter, who is the lady captive we saw in their midst,

"I know the senor and his daughter, and young Inglis was my friend, so I will go on in chase with a few men, unless you care to do so with all your force."

"Better take all, Hassan, so as to make a clean sweep.

"Sergeant Wells, you and two men remain with that dying Mexican.

"Now we are off, Hassan."

And away the cavalry dashed in hot pursuit.

Their horses were fresh, and they were driven hard, so that they rapidly gained upon the outlaws, who fled toward the mountains.

But so closely were they pressed that they stood at bay at last, and, not daring to fire, for fear of killing the captive, the troopers charged into the timber with the saber only.

The fight was short, sharp and decisive, and Diablo Dick and a few of his men barely escaped with their lives in the gathering darkness.

But Marion Inglis was rescued, and escorted to her home by Surgeon Hassan. She found her father dead from his wounds, and no wonder that she turned to Surgeon Hassan for support and sympathy in her affliction.

And from that day it was a love affair between them, and ended in the beautiful Senorita Inglis becoming Mrs. Marion Hassan.

Retiring from the army, Surgeon Hassan settled in Texas with his wife, and it was their beautiful little daughter Belle which, years after, the Comanches kidnapped from her home and bore to their village in the mountains.

#### CHAPTER XVII. WITHOUT HOPE.

THE reader now understands who it was that the Comanches had struck so cruelly, among other ranchers, in their raid that night when Buck Taylor and little Belle Hassan were captured.

In his distress at the loss of his daughter, Surgeon Hassan had vowed vengeance against the red-skins, for he saw how deeply his wife suffered.

But she also knew his secret sorrow and did all in her power to cheer him and hide her own grief.

Their home was changed to another ranch far away, which Captain Hassan owned, and which, though more isolated, they believed would still be better protected from that very circumstance, as the Comanches would hardly go so far to raid only one place.

In the fitting up of their new house, which the ranchero called Soldier's Retreat, they both, husband and wife, tried to drown their sorrows as much as possible, though desolate indeed was the place with little Belle not there and her fate unknown.

That she was dead all began to believe, for scouts, men of courage and border skill undoubted, had been sent by the ranchero to find, if possible, some trace of the missing girl.

He had offered a large sum for her return to them, or proof of her fate, and this had been an incentive to many to endeavor to discover the truth.

Not a word too had been found out as to the fate of Buck Taylor, and a number of his comrades had come to Soldier's Retreat making inquiries regarding him, and learning the particulars would depart with the firm resolve to rescue him, or revenge him if dead.

The ranchero had gathered about him quite a company of cowboys, who called him "cap-

tain," and he kept them under military discipline, for he was determined that his ranch should not be surprised again, and if the Comanches came they should have a warm welcome at the hands of the best fighters of Texas.

He had picked his men, and a better band of Cowboy Rangers was not to be found along the border.

The new house was delightfully situated, and was made most comfortable, and but for the shadow that had fallen upon the lives of the parents they could have been most happy.

From her home in Mexico a number of the faithful peons had accompanied Mrs. Hassan, and Soldier's Retreat was looked upon as an almost palatial abode, in its surroundings and comforts, by the dwellers upon that wild frontier.

That it had been one who had struck the blow upon them who had been their foe in the past not for a moment did either Captain Hassan or his wife suspect.

They had not heard of Richard Drummond for years, and the outlaw chief known as Diablo Dick, and whom they had known as their old foe, had dropped out of sight some time before.

That he had been killed they believed and fondly hoped, and bitter indeed would have been their thoughts, had they known that in Kanon-ka, the chief Death Hand of the Comanches, was a man they had more reason to dread than any other human being.

Had they known that it was Dick Drummond, turned renegade against his race, that had struck them the blow, that had captured their little daughter, they would far rather that she had fallen into the hands of the red-skins alone.

But this they did not suspect, and so at least were not called upon to suffer the greater anguish that it would have caused them.

Other than that a few renegade whites dwelt among the Comanches, it seemed not to be known to the scouts, and that the chief of the tribe was a pale-face, no one suspected, not even Buck Taylor having done so.

"Buck Taylor's Boys," as the band of splendid fellows called themselves, who had come to Soldier's Retreat in search of their leader, were a dashing, daring set of young fellows, who herded cattle for the Government posts.

Buck Taylor, though perhaps the youngest man of the band, had won his right to command by his splendid pluck, skill as a scout, and determined character.

When he had started upon a scouting expedition alone, and had not returned, his "Boys," a score in number, had at once decided to track him, and half of them had at last turned up at Soldier's Retreat, having visited the line of ranches and settlement, and learned the situation.

They arrived at Soldier's Retreat late one afternoon, and were met by Captain Hassan, who had made them warmly welcome.

To him they stated their errand, that they were trailing their young chief, who had been missing for over three months, and that they had learned in the settlement from a cowboy, Brent Baldwin, how Buck Taylor had given warning of the Comanche raid, and since then had not been heard of.

Also they had heard of the capture of little Belle Hassan the same night.

Captain Hassan had stated the whole situation and then the gallant little band had ridden off determined to know the fate of their leader.

But a month after one of their number came to Soldier's Retreat and told the story of what they had done.

They had reconnoitered the Indian camp thoroughly, had captured a brave, a squaw, and a little boy, at different times, and they were convinced that not a single white person was a captive there.

"Then he is dead, and so is my child!"

"Perhaps it is better so," said Captain Hassan, who was now utterly without hope of ever seeing his child again.

#### CHAPTER XVIII. BUCKSKIN SAM.

MONTHS after the raid of the Comanches, under their white chief Death Hand, a horseman was seen coming across the prairie at a lope, and heading for Soldier's Retreat Ranch.

Captain Hassan sat upon the broad piazza of his house, a bundle of newspapers on a stand near him, and several letters, for the cowboy mail-carrier had just brought in the mail from the distant settlement of Trail Crossing, from whence it was gotten semi-monthly.

Seeing the horseman, the ranchero quickly turned his glass upon him, and said:



"I do not know him, but he rides well, and pushes his horse hard."

"I wonder if he has news of—" and he added, in a lower tone, as he glanced in at the open hall door:

"Our little Belle."

Whatever the cause of the horseman's coming, he rode at a steady pace, which, however, did not seem to cause his horse to suffer, though the same swift gait had been kept up since he had first been seen from the ranch.

Entering the stockade gate, he held on toward the house, and as he dismounted Captain Hassan stood there to greet him.

The stranger was a small man with a slender, wiry frame, which denoted wonderful strength and activity.

His face was darkly browned by long exposure to an open air life upon the prairies, and it was resolute and fearless in a marked degree.

He wore a mustache and imperial, had black eyes that were always restless, and his hair was black as jet, and fell in curls far down his back.

Dressed in buckskin from his moccasins to hunting-shirt, he wore a broad sombrero elaborately embroidered with silver, the designs being an eagle, a serpent and a five-pointed Texas star.

He was armed with repeating-rifle, revolvers and bowie, and besides a lariat and bow and arrows hung to his saddle, which was a Mexican tree, the bridle being made of Indian scalps woven into a cord.

He rode with a heavy bit that would check a horse, or break his jaw, massive spurs that could be caught up with a loop on his leggings when he was on foot, and his whole outfit was indicative of one ready for a long trail, his horse, like his rider, showing that he could stand any exertion and hard usage without fatigue or flinching.

"Captain Hassan, I presume, sir?" said the stranger, as the ranchero stepped forward to meet him.

"Yes, sir, and you are welcome to my house."

"Thank you, sir; but let me introduce myself as Sam Hall, perhaps better known as Buckskin Sam, the Texas Ranger."

"Indeed! Major Hall, I am most happy to meet you, for you are well known to me for your daring deeds," and Captain Hassan gazed into the face of his visitor with admiration, for long had he heard of Buckskin Sam,\* whose deeds of daring were like a romance in their thrilling adventures.

"I have come, Captain Hassan, to see you about the capture of your daughter some half a year ago, and also of Buck Taylor, who was doubtless taken at the same time by the Comanches."

The face of Captain Hassan clouded at the words, seeing which Buckskin Sam hastily continued:

"I have been away on the northern plains for months, but learning of Buck Taylor's capture, decided to come and see if he was dead or a prisoner, and I also heard of your sad loss."

"Buck was a young pard of mine whom I loved as a brother, and I am determined to find out if he is dead or alive."

"If dead, then he can be avenged; but if alive he can be rescued, as also will be your little daughter, and so I have come to make this my starting point."

"You give me renewed hope, Major Hall, I assure you, and all that I can do to aid you most gladly shall be done."

"I feel that, sir."

"I have some twenty-five good cowboys on my ranch, and in a couple of days, from the neighboring ranches, could raise as many more, which, added to your force of rangers would make a very formidable little army to go against the Comanches."

"You mistake my intention, Captain Hassan, for my rangers are nearly all ranch men, being at their homes and only called out when needed, and are some half hundred in strength."

"Of course with them, and Buck Taylor's boys, along with the force you could raise, we would have a most formidable band as you say."

"But it will be time enough to call upon the men when they are needed."

"Then you do not intend to start at once?"

"Oh, yes, Captain Hassan, I will claim your hospitality for to-night and start in the morning."

"And your men?"

\*Major Sam S. Hall—Buckskin Sam, was a noted Texas Ranger, a terror to Indians and Mexican outlaws. He died several years ago in Wilmington, Del.—THE AUTHOR.

"Will remain at their houses until I need them."

"What! can this imply that you are going alone to the Indian country?"

"That is just what I do intend, Captain Hassan, for I am going to find out if Buck Taylor and your little daughter are dead or alive."

"When I know the truth, then I will act; but I go alone, and the truth I will know," was the firm response of Buckskin Sam.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### TO LEARN THE TRUTH.

CAPTAIN HASSAN was a skillful prairie man himself, and among his cowboys were some of the best men on the Texas frontier; but had any one of them suggested that he could go alone into the Comanche country, the ranchero would have regarded him as mad.

But here was Buckskin Sam, who coolly said that he was going alone into the Indian country and know the truth as to whether Buck Taylor and Belle Hassan were alive or dead.

And when this small, bronzed-faced man made the assertion of what he would do, somehow Captain Hassan felt confidence in his ability to carry out his intention successfully.

His hopes arose at once, and he led his visitor into the house after calling to a peon to take his horse and give him the most thorough care.

Beautiful, but sad-faced, Mrs. Hassan greeted their guest in her cordial, sweet way, and when her husband told her just why Buckskin Sam had come, she grasped his hand in both her own, and said, in a low, earnest tone:

"God bless you, senor."

The cowboys learning that the famous Ranger chief was over at the ranch, came from their camp a couple of miles away to see him.

A few knew him, but all gave him a rousing cowboy greeting, and one of the men said, with enthusiasm:

"Waal, pard, ef any other feller, barrin' Buck Taylor himself, said he were goin' ter do what you has in view, I'd set him down as a darned fool as wanted ter pervide cold meat fer coyotes; but, somehow, I kinder has the idee that you knows jist what you is about, and ef yer doesn't know what is before yer, then ther hard lessons ye has l'arned on ther perarers has done yer no sarvice."

"Pard Sam, I are bettin' my whole pile upon yer."

Buckskin Sam thanked the cowboys for the honor done him by their call, and then they departed again for their camps, all of them, with perhaps a couple of exceptions, cheered by the belief that the Ranger captain would accomplish all that he set out to do.

It was late when Captain Hassan and his guest retired, for the ranchero had found the Ranger a most entertaining companion, while, knowing the deep interest the father must feel in his plan, he told him just what he intended to do.

"You see, Captain Hassan," he said, "I go prepared for anything that may turn up."

"In my saddle-pockets I have a razor, paints, feathers and an Indian outfit, with which I can disguise myself completely."

"My curly hair can be braided in with red flannel, which will hide that it is not straight as an Indian's, and the razor will soon take off my mustache and imperial if need be."

"You do not intend certainly to enter the Comanche village?"

"Why not, sir?"

"The danger is appalling."

"Oh, no, for I'll pass muster at night very well."

"But suppose you are spoken to?"

"I speak Comanche as well as I do English, sir."

"That is well; but then I dread the danger you will run."

"No, I shall be cautious, as I always am, Captain Hassan, for the tales of my utter recklessness are all romances, as I never venture anything without knowing just what I am about."

"Now I shall search a hiding-place for my horse somewhere in the vicinity of the Indian village, and at night can reconnoiter until assured of what I can do."

"If I can get into the village, disguised as an Indian, it will not take me long to find out if those I seek are there."

"If they should be still alive?"

"Then I shall find out the exact situation, and where and how they are held."

"If unable to rescue them alone, then I shall discover the best plan of doing so by force and come for you and your men, send for my Rangers and Buck Taylor's Boys, and get as many more good fellows as we can, with perhaps a

couple of companies of cavalry from the fort, and two pieces of artillery, for should we be pursued, we must be able to beat them back, and therein lies the greatest danger."

"Should I be able to rescue the prisoners alone, so much the better, for I shall cover up my tracks so that they will never be able to trail us."

"Heaven grant it."

"I say Amen to that, sir."

"But if they are dead will you be able to discover the fact?"

"Oh, yes sir."

"I cannot just see how?"

"A bird that can sing and won't sing, must be made to sing, Captain Hassan."

"I don't exactly catch your meaning, Major Hall."

"Well, sir, if I can catch an Indian, I can make him tell the truth."

"I fear they will not do so."

"No, you cannot force an Indian to tell in our way, through fear of his life; but I shall try a different plan, for if I catch him he will not know that I too am not a Comanche."

"Ah! I see, and all that you say gives me greater confidence in your being able to accomplish your purpose."

"But, major?"

"Yes, sir."

"Don't you think that I had better accompany you, for I am not a tenderfoot upon the prairies, I assure you?"

"No, sir, for I can go alone with greater safety."

"When I need you, sir, I will give you warning in good time, and it will be no harm to have your men notified that they may be called upon at any time, for when I return, if I do, you will no longer be in suspense as to the fate that has befallen your little daughter and Buck Taylor."

"Yes, I feel that we will know the truth," was the low response of Edward Hassan.

## CHAPTER XX.

### ON THE LONE TRAIL.

BOTH horse and rider were refreshed by the halt at Soldier's Retreat, and Buckskin Sam went on his way full of hope.

Mrs. Hassan had told him that she would not only pray for his success, but for his own safety, and Captain Hassan had wrung his hand in parting without a word.

But the Ranger knew well how much that silent parting meant.

He had decided to approach the Indian village from the other direction than across the prairies, where a guard would always be upon the watch.

He had scouted the mountains often and would reach a spot in the rear of the Indian camp where he need have no fears of finding Indian scouts or lookouts.

There was no danger to be apprehended from that direction, he was sure the Indians felt assured, and yet one man might make his way around there, where a dozen or more, could not do so.

It was after a long flank movement that he reached the mountains in the rear of the Comanche village, and he had been particular to move only by daylight, cover up his trail where he could, and go very slow, so as not to distress his horse.

When he got into the vicinity of the Comanche village, he used his bow and arrows when he needed game, for he would not have fired a shot there had he been almost starving.

In the use of the bow he showed himself as dead a shot as he was noted for being with rifle and revolver.

At last he came to a stream into the bed of which he turned, following it for several miles until he reached a spot where he could go ashore upon solid rock.

Here he placed his blankets, and leading his horse first upon one, then the other, led him several hundred yards toward a canyon, the iron hoofs not making the slightest mark upon the rocks.

The canyon entrance was half hidden by underbrush; but into it Buckskin Sam went and when he had penetrated some distance came to where there was grass in plenty and a rivulet.

Having covered up his tracks thoroughly, and being at the head of the canyon, he knew there was nothing to bring any one else there, unless it was to go into hiding as he had done.

From the canyon to the Indian village he knew was some six or seven miles, and this distance he would make upon foot.

Staking out his horse he then arranged his camp, gathering wood so as to cook at night, when the firelight would not be seen.

Then he set about getting his disguise, and



with a piece of glass set upon a rock, took out his razor and began to shave off his mustache, in fact to make his whole face as clean as an Indian's.

This done, and he parted with his handsome mustache and imperial without a sigh of regret, he took out a roll of narrow red flannel and began to plait it in his long black hair, which he straightened the curls out of by making it very wet.

Into the braids he fastened eagle-feathers until he had formed a head-dress, or bonnet.

Then he took a liquid from a bottle and began to stain his face, neck, breast, arms and feet with it.

He was not the man to take chances, for the removal of a moccasin, rolling up his sleeve, or the opening of his hunting-shirt would betray the white skin.

So he stained himself most thoroughly with the reddish-brown liquid, which gave his skin the exact hue of an Indian.

This done he took out his paints, red, yellow, black and white, and began to streak his face, neck and the backs of his hands until he looked like a brave in full war paint.

His red blanket was then arranged to throw over his shoulders, while under it was to be worn a shirt of birds' feathers, the skins of the birds having been skillfully torn off with the feathers on, and then cured.

This shirt hid his revolvers, and his rifle, which was strapped up and down his back, so as not to be seen.

His bow and arrows were worn openly, and a bag of provisions was also hidden under the sheltering red blanket.

When all was in readiness, Buckskin Sam painted in black upon the red blanket certain Indian signs, which he knew well, and smiled complacently as he completed the work, while he said to himself:

"I guess I'll pass as a pretty good Indian; but woe be unto the Comanche that discovers that I am a pale-face."

"Now to get all the rest I can, and then stake my horse out where he can get grass enough to last him for a couple of days, as I may be detained that time."

He lay down to rest, and almost instantly sunk to sleep.

When he awoke it was dark, and quickly building a fire he cooked what food he needed and put it in his provision bag.

Then he staked his horse out in such a way that he could get both water and grass in plenty, and remarked:

"If you don't bind yourself up in this rope, Yankee, you will be all right."

The horse gave him a look as though to show he understood the exact situation, and then Buckskin Sam completed his Indian toilet and started off on the trail to the Comanche village.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### BUCKSKIN SAM'S BOLD GAME.

THAT it required coolness and courage of the greatest kind for a man to venture as Buckskin Sam was doing, into the very lines of the Comanche village, the reader can well comprehend.

He made his way along the ridge upon which the village was located, and came to a point where there was a large bowl, or round valley in the mountains.

He listened attentively, and muttered:

"Yes, they keep their horses and cattle there, for only the passes have to be guarded, as the precipitous sides of the mountains prevent the cattle from straying."

"Now to go on to the village."

He continued along the ridge, going with the greatest caution, for he was drawing so near now that he knew he might run upon an Indian sentinel, or one prowling around at any minute.

Soon the lights of the camp-fires came in sight, and he could hear the hum of voices arising from the valley in the mountain-top in which the camp was situated.

"They have chosen a place as hard to take as a fort, for their village," he said, and he recalled the strong position as he remembered it some years before when scouting through the mountains.

Suddenly he dropped down among the rocks and lay as quiet as death, for his quick hearing had noted falling hoofs and voices near at hand.

Then there came into view a line of horsemen riding along the trail, and from his hiding-place he eyed them closely while his ears were open for every sound that fell from their lips.

"A hunting party, thank Heaven!"

"I feared they were going on the war-path, and I would have to kill my horse, as Buck

Taylor did, to get around and warn the settlements."

"I am sure that Buck must have been doing what he often told me he would do, trying to get into the Indian village, or find a secret approach to it for an attack, when he made the discovery that the warriors were starting upon the war-path, and then rode for it as he did."

"Poor fellow! I only hope he is not dead, and somehow I have hope that he is not; but he must have been made to suffer greatly as a prisoner."

"And that sweet child too?"

"My heart bleeds for her, and it would be better for her had they killed her."

"But I shall soon know the truth."

Thus he mused, after having seen the file of horsemen ride by.

He had counted them, and found there were fully a hundred, while every brave nearly led one or more ponies to bring back the game they were going to kill.

Their words, as they rode along, fell distinctly upon the ears of the hiding scout, and told him that their mission was one to provide food for the village, not a warlike one.

"If I had the men near, and enough of them, now would be the time to attack their village, with a hundred of their best warriors gone."

"And we could ambush the hunters upon their return and wipe them out."

"I guess such a blow would stop Comanche raiding on this frontier for a long time."

"But my duty now is to find out what white captives they have in their village, and also discover a trail by which we can secretly approach and attack them at another time."

"Now to go into the village."

The Indian horsemen had filed out of sight, and rising from his hiding-place, Buckskin Sam struck off on the trail they had passed along, and which led into the Comanche village.

Having been the prisoner of the Comanches on two different occasions, camped with them when they were at peace with the whites, and had a chief, a refugee from his people, whom he had befriended and made his comrade for a long while, Buckskin Sam had not only learned their language perfectly, but had become acquainted with their actions, superstitions and peculiarities.

The rig in which he had gotten himself up was that of a medicine-chief, and they were allowed the greatest freedom he well knew.

He therefore determined to enter the village boldly, playing the part of a medicine-man, and so he went on his way, expecting to find a guard which he would have to pass, and where his greatest danger would lie.

But soon he came in sight of a camp-fire, and around it were half a dozen forms.

They were camped right at the pass through the rocks, leading down into the village.

He saw at once that the Comanches were upon the alert against a surprise, though an advance guard must be stationed miles away where a view of a foe advancing over the prairie could be seen.

To dare one man he would take the chances, but half a dozen, no.

It would be sheer madness, for where he would come under the inspection of half a dozen braves, the cheat would be discovered.

So he glided back out of sight, should any chance to look that way, and said to himself:

"I will camp on the trail and capture some brave who passes along, and thus find out what I would know."

So he retreated to a secure hiding-place a mile from the camp, and with the patience of an Indian sat down to abide his time until a red-skin should come along and fall his prey.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### THE PRISONER.

THE sun was just rising, when a horseman came in sight, slowly riding along the trail to the village.

He rode like one in suffering, for he was all bent over, and his left arm hung limp to his side.

It was one of the hunters, whose horse had fallen with him, seriously hurting him, for his arm was broken, and he had received some severe bruises.

The glass of Buckskin Sam, from his hiding-place, caused him to take in the situation at a glance, and he glided out into the trail and stood with his hands raised.

The suffering Indian rode almost upon him before he saw him, and then he drew rein quickly, for though near his own village, his nature was suspicious.

"My brother is hurt, and I will help him,"

said Buckskin Sam in the Comanche tongue, as he advanced toward the brave.

A medicine-man just then was what the warrior desired most to see; but in the glare of day he did not recognize the pretended Comanche, and said in a suspicious tone:

"My brother is not the great medicine-chief, Helping Hand, nor the medicine-man Black Spirit, of my people."

"No, I am the medicine-man Sunlight, called to aid the great chief Black Spirit, who has sent me to get good medicine, that I alone know how to find."

"My brother went with the hunters last night, and his horse has fallen and hurt him; but the Sunlight can make him well again."

"Let him follow me."

Thus reassured the brave turned off the trail and followed the form gliding along before him until they had gone some distance from the trail.

Buckskin Sam played his part well, going along as though in search of some spot, and at last halted under a large tree.

He aided the red-skin to dismount, hitched his horse for him, and spread his blanket for him to lie upon.

Then he took from his buckskin bag some thongs and leaves, bruising the latter by beating them with rocks.

The arm of the Indian was broken above the elbow, and it was set with a skill that a surgeon might have envied, the bruised leaves bound upon it with buckskin bands and thongs.

Then the bruises were dressed with equal care, the Indian uttering no groan although he had suffered greatly.

Then the pretended medicine-man began to quietly question the brave, but in a way not to excite suspicion.

It was most ingeniously done, and by degrees Buckskin Sam learned that after the return of the hunters, which would be in a couple of weeks, arrangements would be begun for a raid upon the settlement with a large force of warriors.

The hunters were to kill their game in large quantities, and preserve it for winter use, and then return to the village, though while hunting certain picked scouts were to glean all the information they could as to the force in the settlement, the position of Buckskin Sam's Rangers, and the number of soldiers within call of aid for the ranchers.

Telling the brave a vision that he had, or a dream, Buckskin Sam wormed out of him a great deal of information, and that which surprised him most was the fact that the head chief of the Comanches, Ka-noon-ka, the Death Hand, was a white man, for this he had not suspected before, and he knew that no one else on the frontier did.

Buckskin Sam at last said that if he could capture a white girl and a pale-face warrior, and put them to death in a way commanded by the Great Spirit in a dream to him, he could send the Comanche braves upon a trail that would make them rich in scalps and plunder.

"Why will not the Little Lily, and the Comanche Killer do?" asked the red-skin.

Buckskin Sam fairly started.

He had purposely said a little white girl and a white brave, and now came the suggestion following his words that "the Little Lily and the Comanche Killer" might do.

Who could these two be but Belle Hassan and Buck Taylor?

But he was too cunning to show his gratification, so said in an inquiring way:

"But the Little Lily and the Comanche Killer are like our own people."

"The great chief Death Hand protects them; but our people hate them, for they are our foes," was the answer.

"Does the Fighting Fox know this?"

"Fighting Fox believes that the Little Lily hates our people and will never become a Comanche, and the Comanche Killer's hands are red with the blood of our own kindred."

"He is not like our great pale-face chief the Death Hand, who is a true Comanche."

"If the Fighting Fox knows this in his heart, then let him help the Sunlight do a great thing for our people."

"If he can bring to me the Comanche Killer and the Little Lily, so that I can take their lives, then will we know just what is best for our people, for the Great Spirit will reveal to us in a dream just what we are to do, and the Fighting Fox will become a mighty chief, the leader of his tribe."

"Does the Fighting Fox hear the words of the medicine-man, Sunlight?"

"The Fighting Fox hears and his heart is glad."



"He is a true warrior and does not wish to anger the great chief Death Hand; but he will obey the medicine-chief Sunlight, for it is for the good of his people," and the wily brave said nothing of the good he expected to reap himself from obeying the orders of the supposed Comanche medicine-man.

"The Fighting Fox has spoken well.

"Let him bring to me here the Comanche Killer and the Little Lily when the third night has come.

"The medicine-chief will be here to kill them that the Fighting Fox and the Sunlight may dream what is the wish of the Great Spirit!"

#### CHAPTER XXIII.

##### IN DURANCE VILE.

We left Buck Taylor a prisoner in the lodge at the Comanche village, watching the return of the raiders as they came down the ridge trail and were met by the warriors, squaws and children to see what their success had been.

The wild wails of women and children, as they beheld the dead forms of their husbands and fathers hanging limp across their ponies, and saw others wounded and supported by their comrades, made the mountains echo far and wide with their doleful sound.

Then came also ponies laden with plunder, warriors bearing freshly taken scalps, and this sight in a measure soothed the sorrow of those who had lost kindred, for revenge is a solace that quickly heals wounds in red-skin hearts.

Then there was known to be a white prisoner up at the Prison Lodge whom they had every reason to rejoice in the capture of—Buck Taylor, whose last exploit in defending himself when at bay in the open grave, had already gained for him the name of the "Comanche Killer."

When he was put to the torture, the red-skins would rejoice.

In the midst of the returning warriors was another prisoner, a young girl, white-faced, frightened at the weird and appalling surroundings, but strangely calm.

This girl prisoner the great chief Death Hand had placed at once in the care of his favorite warrior, Fighting Fox, and his squaw, a young woman.

They had no children, and were told to care for the little white captive as for their own child, until the chief decided what should be done with her.

He had hoped to capture Captain Hassan and his wife, that he might enjoy a cruel revenge upon them, for Dick Drummond, driven at last to become a renegade white, and herd with the cruelest foes of his race, had never forgiven Marion Inglis for refusing to become his wife, nor Captain Hassan for marrying her, and being the friend of her brother Ignacio.

The parents he had failed to get into his power; but their only child, the beautiful little Belle, was his captive, and through her they should suffer most keenly.

He would use her to obtain a large ransom from them, and then—when he had the ransom, he would recapture the girl.

All through the night after the return of the red-skin raiders, the village was wild with mingled grief and joy.

The cunning chief had managed to have it whispered about that the white scout, Buck Taylor, had given warning of their coming, and yet he, Death Hand, had snatched victory from defeat, and had gotten scalps and plunder in spite of their white foes being prepared for them.

The Indians saw the affair just as he wished them to do, and they idolized their white renegade chief still the more.

Buck Taylor did not drop to sleep until a very late hour.

He was more deeply grieved at seeing that little white captive brought into the Indian village, than at his own capture, to his credit be it said.

Where he had met Death Hand before he could not understand, and yet for some reason unknown to him the chief had seen fit to spare his life.

But was it from mercy, or to torment him in the future?

The morrow would doubtless tell him all, and determined to not worry until the time came, as far as he was concerned, Buck Taylor at last sunk to sleep.

When he awoke he felt sore and stiff, while the bonds upon his legs and arms pained him considerably.

He was given some boiled meat and a tin cup of coffee, sent him by the chief, and soon after Death Hand was seen approaching the tepee where he was kept under the guard of two braves.

As he came along, walking erect as a soldier, and with his every movement graceful, Buck Taylor eyed him closely.

There was nothing in his make-up to designate the white man, for he wore fully the costume of a Comanche chief, even to the head-dress.

His walk and bearing, however, betrayed him to the keen eyes of the prisoner, who saw, as he drew nearer, that he was in full war-paint, and it completely hid his white skin.

Approaching the tepee he cast a glance at the prisoner, as he lay upon his blanket, and at once said to the guards that his bonds were too tight; to loosen them.

The two braves obeyed, and then the chief spoke in English, and said:

"Well, Buck Taylor, in spite of the warning you gave, I was successful in my raid."

"You were beaten back, rather, you mean."

"Not so, for I returned with both plunder and scalps."

"I saw a number of dead warriors brought in last night, and wounded ones too, while the plunder was mighty scant and only one girl prisoner."

"I guess if you count your scalps, you will find that you have two dead warriors and one wounded for every one taken."

"I did not come here to argue with you, Buck Taylor," angrily said the chief.

"Why did you come then?"

"To tell you that two years ago, when in the Mexican mines, I was accused of killing and robbing a miner, and the Vigilantes would have hanged me but for you, for, where there was no proof of my guilt, you said that I should have the benefit of the doubt, and you backed up your words with your revolvers and I was set free."

"But I did kill the man, though I had not time to rob him of the large treasure I knew he had hidden away, and now I have come to make terms with you for your life."

"I know you now, Deadly Dick," said Buck Taylor in a low, earnest voice.

#### CHAPTER XXIV.

##### THE CHIEF'S TERMS.

"Yes, I know you now, Deadly Dick, in spite of your paint and feathers," repeated Buck Taylor.

"Did you know any harm of me in the mines?"

"No, not then, though it was hinted that you were a desperado and very bad man."

"Nick Sands, a man known to be very rich, was murdered, and somehow you were suspected, for you were a new man there."

"I had met you the night before far from Sands's cabin, and did not believe you guilty, so I stood at bay to protect you and did do it."

"I remember it well."

"You were let go, but escorted fifty miles from the camps and told to go, and afterward it was found that you were none other than Diablo Dick, the Mexican outlaw, and proof was discovered that you had killed Nick Sands, so I was all wrong in protecting you as I did."

"Well, you saved my life, and I am not one to forget a favor rendered me any more than I would a wrong done me."

"I was forced to hunt safety among the red-skins, and I believe you are the only one who knows that Ka-noon-ka the Death Hand, is a white man."

"Now I am head chief here, and I hold the power of the sultan over my people, and so my word is law."

"It seems to be."

"It is, as you will find out."

"Then do one good act to atone for your crimes, by letting that poor little girl go free."

"Ah! you saw my captive?"

"I got a glance of her, and she and I are your only prisoners."

"True; but I have work for you to do, and the girl is worth a great deal to me."

"Who is she?"

"Captain Hassan's child."

"Ah, the ranchero of Soldier's Retreat."

"Yes, his wife was Senorita Marion Inglis, a Mexican, and she refused to become my wife."

"Ah! you flew high."

Not noticing the satire the renegade continued:

"She refused my love, and I am revengeful."

"She made me what I am to-day."

"It is a pity to blame a woman who did not love you for all your crimes."

"She is responsible for I would have been a different man had she become my wife."

"And you avenge yourself by capturing her child?"

"I lost her money by not marrying her, and I

have a chance now to make Marion Hassan pay heavily to get her child back again."

"Oh, yes, they will pay to save their daughter, as I would, or any one else."

"Visit your fury upon me, Deadly Dick, but spare that young girl."

"I am known here as Chief Death Hand."

"True, but in the mines as Deadly Dick, and in Mexico as Diablo Dick."

"Who you were before I do not know; but if it so pleases you, I will call you Death Hand the Renegade."

"Well, I wish to offer you a chance for your life."

"Then you intend to kill me?"

"I have not decided; but let me tell you that I did not rob Nick Sands, the miner, though I have a map giving full particulars of just where he has buried over thirty thousand in gold."

"This map I will give to you, if you will go with it to the spot and secure the gold."

"Then you would trust me?"

"Under some circumstances, yes."

"Name your terms."

"You are to vow to return with that treasure, and when you have done so I will pledge you my honor to set you free."

"I beg pardon, but what was it you said you would pledge?"

"My honor."

"You are joking, for a man can only pledge what he possesses."

"Do not insult me, Taylor, for it will do no good."

"Well, to your terms?"

"You bring me that treasure and I will set you free, giving you a good share."

"But, first, I would have you go to Captain Hassan, tell him that I hold his child a captive, and demand for her ransom twenty thousand dollars, which you can bring to a certain specified rendezvous, where I will have the girl."

"Tell him that Dick Drummond is the man who has her in his power, and that will be enough, I assure you."

"Doubtless."

"But first you are to get Nick Sands's treasure and bring it to me."

"You trust me to do so?"

"Yes, for I shall put you upon your most sacred oath to return, and will give you until a certain date to do so."

"Should I break my oath?"

"I do not believe that you will."

"But should I?"

"Well, on the date set for your return, should you deceive me, I will forego the money I hope to get for ransom from Ned Hassan and his wife, and turn the child over to the warriors of my village to torture as their cruel natures may inspire them to do."

"Good God! would you do such a deed as that?" cried Buck Taylor, in horror.

"I would, and will, if you fail me."

"This puts a terrible responsibility upon me!"

"How so?"

"You make me return to perhaps torture myself, once I am free from you, and feeling all the while should aught happen to me, to prevent my coming back, that the beautiful child captive you have, must suffer the torments of the damned."

"Well, you have the alternative, to accept my terms or refuse them."

"If you accept, then you and the child get your liberty, though of course it is paid for liberally."

"With that gold I shall seek a home elsewhere, for I know how this must end some day."

"Refuse, and after you have seen the girl given over to torture, your own time shall come."

"I'll give you several weeks to think it over," and the renegade chief departed from the tepee leaving his prisoner a prey to the most bitter thoughts.

#### CHAPTER XXV.

##### ACCEPTED.

THE more Buck Taylor thought over the terms of the chief, Death Hand, the more he felt how utterly he held him in his power, by his threat against the little girl captive.

It was an appeal to his humanity, his chivalry, his manhood.

Could he refuse to save the beautiful girl from an appalling fate, when he could do so by simply carrying out the wishes of the renegade?

He recognized the fact that the renegade had spoken truly, when he said that his life as a chief must end some day in the near future.

He could see that he had been driven among the Indians as a refuge.



That he was using them to gain his own ends, and that now it was in his power to secure a handsome sum of money from Nick Sands's buried treasure, and another from the ransom of Belle Hassan, and with this he would leave the country, seeking safety in another land, and with the means of living there.

Thus, to gain this, both he and Belle Hassan were worth more to him alive than dead, and if he gained gold through them living he could afford to let them go free, for what interest held the chief in the Comanches other than to further his schemes?

So at last Buck Taylor decided to go as bidden.

He saw the little captive each day, white-faced, scared-looking, yet bearing up bravely, as it was her nature to do.

He must rescue that lovely girl from the awful fate threatening her.

In a couple of weeks his arrow wounds had healed, as also the bruises he had received at the hands of his captors, and he made signs to his guards that he wished to see their chief, for that he could understand and speak their language perfectly, he would not let them know.

The renegade came at his bidding, and said:

"Well have you made up your mind, Buck Taylor, for I have given you plenty of time?"

"Oh, yes, when you knew I was too badly used up to go before."

"You will go?"

"Yes."

"To the mines?"

"I will."

"And get Nick Sands's treasure?"

"I will get it if your map takes me to the place where it is hidden."

"It will do so, for he had just drawn it, I suppose to send away in case of accident to him, when I killed him."

"But, driven out of the mines as I was, I could not get what I had murdered him to secure."

"I see."

"You are to take a most solemn oath, by all you hold sacred, to bring me the treasure."

"Yes."

"You are to vow just as solemnly not to let any one know you have been the Comanches' prisoner, and to go and return as soon as you can."

"I understand."

"You do not have to go near the Texas settlements and ranches, as you know, but up into New Mexico, and I will give you back your weapons, saddle and bridle, and the best animal I have here in the village, while you shall have a complete outfit."

"I will need it, for I have a long trail ahead of me."

"Not so long as the trail that little girl will start upon if you fail to return here to me with the gold."

"I am not one to steal any one's gold, or to break a pledge made in all solemnity, Chief Death Hand."

"I understand that, or I would not trust you as I am compelled to do."

"Now you shall be set free from your bonds and get back the use of your limbs; but you must not go out of sight of your guards, for if you attempt to escape before doing my bidding, the fate of the child captive shall be the rope."

"I am no fool to set wolves upon her by act of mine, when it is in my power to save her."

That is good reasoning, and now I shall give you your freedom."

A moment after Buck Taylor arose to his feet and stretched his limbs, a free man as far as bonds were concerned.

His captor gave him to understand that he had explained to the Indians that he had become their ally, and was to go upon a mission that would enrich them.

That the red-skins were completely under the influence of their white chief Buck Taylor discerned, not only from the warriors who had been his guards, but from other things he had observed.

He walked about the village in a quiet way, all eyes upon him, many glaring at him with hatred, others hoping he would prove as good a Comanche as had their white chief.

It was the triumph of the pale-face over the red-skin, for with all their vanity and conceit, their love of power, the Indian warriors were glad to be ruled by the renegade chief, and glad again to welcome another pale-face, one who had proven himself so deadly a foe, so terrible a fighter, as their ally.

Once only did Buck Taylor get a chance to speak to his little fellow captive, and then he glanced quickly about, and seeing that the chief

was not within hearing said in a sing-song way, as though singing:

"Don't despair, Little Lily, for you will be rescued in good time."

"See, I am free, and though I leave for a long while perhaps, I will return and save you, so cheer up Little Lily."

The girl's face flushed, her eyes sparkled, but she made no reply, while Buck Taylor quickly walked away, as he feared to cause the red-skin to grow suspicious.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### IN THE MINES.

BUCK TAYLOR had not the slightest reason to complain of his "outfit" prepared for him by the renegade chief.

His horse was a magnificent animal, one lately captured on the Indian raid, and he had his own saddle, bridle and weapons.

Then he had a couple of rubber blankets, with as many *serapes* and all else to make him comfortable in his lonely camps at night.

He had so well played utter ignorance of the Comanche tongue, never once making a mistake, that he had picked up considerable information in the village not intended for him to know.

At last he set out one morning, after a warning from the chief, and took the trail heading back through the mountains toward New Mexico.

"That is a cunning fellow, that renegade," he said to himself as he rode along.

"Now he trusts me, and yet he is so suspicious that I might fail him, and striking for the fort and settlements bring a force to attack him, that last night he sent off half a dozen different bands to head me off should I take other trail than to New Mexico."

"And more, I am just as sure that I am being followed also, to see if I swerve from the trail."

"Well, it is a peculiar position to place one in, for it makes me responsible for the safety of that little captive."

"I shall go to the mines, of course, and having done this, then will be my time to act for the safety of Little Lily, for not the remotest idea has the renegade of giving her up even after he gets his ransom for her."

"I am sure of that."

He rode on, musing as he did so, and just before sunset went over a ridge which commanded a view far back over the trail he had come.

He rode on to a small creek, hitched his horse to a limb overhanging the water, so that he would have to stand in the stream, drew off his boots and making them fast to his saddle slid down and went ashore.

He stepped so that his bootless feet would leave no trail to the top of the ridge, keeping out of sight from any one coming across the plain beyond, by hiding in some bushes.

For half an hour he stood there, his eyes peering out over the plain, and then he said suddenly:

"I knew it!"

"There they come upon my trail, and there are just nine of them."

"It would have been death to me had I intended to play false and head for the fort and settlements."

"Now I know that they will keep on my trail until they are certain I have gone to the mines."

He retraced his way, remounted his horse and rode on out of the stream, the current washing away all tracks, and his trail appearing as though he had simply crossed there without halting.

A couple of miles further on he halted to camp, and though expecting no disturbance, yet he sought a place that he could defend easily and escape from if driven to it.

He built a fire, yet had it so hidden that he could not be picked off by its light from a distance.

Having watered his horse he staked him out within reach, and then sunk to sleep.

He was not disturbed during the night, and there were no fresh trails, he discovered as he went upon his way, to show that the Indians following him had passed his camp.

Later on in the day he got another chance to look back over the trail, and as before he discovered that he was being followed at a long distance.

"Well, they will only find that I held straight on to the mines and so return and report to their chief."

"I only wish I could quickly get together force enough to return and attack their village; but no, that lovely child shall not be sacrificed."

Again he camped when night came; but upon the third day's travel he found that the Indians had stopped trailing him.

They believed that he was going straight to the mines, and more they did not care to trust themselves so far from their village, so turned back to make their report to their chief.

On his way went Buck Taylor, riding slowly, but steadily, not forcing his horse, and in seemingly no great hurry.

Days passed and at last he drew near the mining country of New Mexico.

He had been all through that part of the country, for though a youth in years, he was an old frontiersman and was skilled in prairie and mountain craft and a perfect guide as well.

He at last reached the scattering camps, but pressed on to the place where he had once passed some weeks and known there Nick Sands and the renegade chief as Deadly Dick.

Nick Sands had been popular with all, and had struck it rich from the very day of his coming.

It was said that he had once been rich, but lost his fortune by indorsing notes for a friend, and had come to the mines to make another, leaving a wife and two little daughters at home to await his return.

But he had been foully murdered, and as all believed, had been also robbed of all his hard-earned gold.

And it was up to his cabin that Buck Taylor rode one evening just at sunset, having at last reached the end of his long journey to the mines.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### BUCK TAYLOR'S DOUBLE GAME.

As Buck Taylor rode up to the door of the cabin he saw seated there two miners, smoking their pipes after having just finished their supper.

One of them he knew as a hard-working fellow upon whom Dame Fortune had not smiled very generously; but the other was a stranger to him.

"Ho, Buck, my boy, is that you?" cried the miner, recognizing the young man.

"Yes, Pard Hatfield, I am again in the mines for a short while."

"Then bunk in with us, for we have plenty of room."

"This is my pard Ben Brewster, and we are working poor Nick Sands's old lead."

"I see that you have his house, and I hope it pays you," said Buck as Ben Brewster got up and grasped his hand also in welcome.

"Well, just passable; but it pays."

"Sit down and Ben will get you up some supper, while I stake your horse out."

"I always liked you, Buck, and am glad to see you again, though I do think you cheated the Devil out of his dues when you saved that fellow Deadly Dick from being hanged."

"I am pretty sure that I did, Pard Hatfield; but I'll see to my horse and then join you."

His horse cared for Buck said:

"How was it you got the lead of Nick Sands, Pard Hatfield?"

"Well, you see his widow came out here to see what she could find."

"We all knew Nick had struck it rich, but if he had more than his murderer found it could not be discovered."

"His widow was a perfect little beauty, with great large dark eyes full of tears, and she spent many a day weeping over Nick's grave."

"I felt so sorry for her, knowing how little she got in the way of gold, that Ben here and I decided to buy the cabin and old lead, which was pretty well worked out."

"But we did it and she returned home with what we gave her, and said when she made ample money she would have her husband's body moved to the old burying ground in Virginia."

"Well, Pard Hatfield, I am glad to see you in charge, and to know that you and Mr. Brewster here befriended the lady."

"Now I am here on a particular business, and if I cannot explain it to you, you must still have confidence enough in me to do as I ask you, for you will benefit, not lose by it, I promise you."

"As I understand, you have bought the Sands claim?"

"We have."

"And are working it?"

"Yes."

"With poor results?"

"Yes."

"Well, I can tell you how to work to strike a rich lead; but you must first promise to do something for me."



"Fire away, Buck, for we are your game," said Hatfield.

"So I say," answered Ben Brewster, and he continued:

"I never met you before, Buck Taylor, but I have heard enough about you to make me like you, and you belie your looks if you are not square clean through."

"Well, what I wish you to do, Hatfield, is to start at once for Virginia and bring the widow of Nick Sands back here."

"The devil!"

"No, the widow, and when I have told her a secret, then I will show you that you have not made a bad bargain in buying your claim to help Mrs. Sands out."

"Pard Buck, I have that much confidence in you to do what you ask."

"I thank you, Mr. Hatfield, and while you are gone I'll be Mr. Brewster's guest, for I have some work to do of an important nature."

"When you return I will be ready for you and the lady you bring with you."

"But will she come?"

"Tell her simply that her husband, though killed, was not robbed, as all supposed, and that Buck Taylor will give her the clew to find all the gold that Nick Sands hid away."

"Oh, Lord! do you mean it?"

"I do; but you must not let a soul in the camps know my secret."

"Now, when will you get off?"

"To-morrow."

"The sooner the better, for I am limited on time."

"I see," and both Hatfield and Brewster felt sure that Buck Taylor was on a trail he knew the ending of well.

#### CHAPTER XXVIII. MET ON THE TRAIL.

ROBERT HATFIELD had started upon his errand, carrying with him a very liberal supply of money, in case he should find Mrs. Sands too poor to pay her own expenses back to the mines.

He had gone first by his old home, to visit his parents, whom he had not seen for years, and it was pardonable in him, perhaps, to be glad to show them that unaided he had made some money.

After but a couple of days at his home in Pennsylvania, he had gone on to Virginia, to the little village where dwelt Mrs. Sands.

He found her living in a neat little cottage, tastefully furnished, and supporting herself and her two children by teaching.

It did not require a great deal of urging on the part of Bob Hatfield to get her to return with him to the mines, for he had been a very devoted friend to her in her visit there, and her sorrows.

But traveling in those days in the far West was not what it is to-day, and it was quite a long while before the journey drew near its close.

Bob Hatfield had taken the coach with his fair charge, and knowing the dangers of the road, when the vehicle suddenly came to a halt they supposed that it was held up by road-agents, until they heard the driver call out:

"Ho, Buck Taylor, I'm durned ef I didn't think you was a road-agint, sittin' thar on yer horse in their trail."

"No, Ribbons, I only wished to know if Bob Hatfield is a passenger with you?"

"He be."

"Who else?"

"A pretty lady, ther widder o' Nick Sands, who was kilt, yer recomembers."

Buck Taylor was now at the stage door, and Bob Hatfield warmly greeted him, after which he presented Mrs. Sands.

"I have been on the watch for you for a couple of weeks, Bob, and I am going to ask Ribbons to hold on long enough for me to have a little talk with you and Mrs. Sands, and then to say nothing about it in the camps."

"I'll do as yer wishes, Buck," said the driver.

"Now, Mrs. Sands, here is a paper, a copy of an original that I hold, and by it you can find, through Hatfield and his pard Brewster, just where your husband hid his gold, and there is quite a fortune there, as you will discover, for the different deposits are put here in this column of figures, as you see."

"Go there to-morrow and take possession, for I must come the next day, to keep a certain vow that I have made."

"Then you will also find on the paper, directions to follow a different lead in the claim you sold, and which will pan out rich for Hatfield and Brewster."

"Here are the copies, and I have the originals, so go to-morrow, and in excuse for your

return, simply say that you came in possession of papers giving you the knowledge of your husband's hiding-place for his gold."

"But do not mention from whom your knowledge came."

"I have no more to say," and Buck turned his horse and rode away.

On drove the coach, and Bob Hatfield hastily glanced over the papers, which were copies of a map and some directions regarding the new lead in the claim of Nick Sands.

Mrs. Sands went to the Miners' Tavern upon her arrival, and was given the best quarters the place afforded.

The next day, accompanied by Hatfield and Brewster, she started out upon her search, and when she returned to the tavern in the evening, she considered herself a rich woman.

And the same papers had also shown to Bob Hatfield and Ben Brewster that they had lost nothing in buying the claim to help the poor woman out, for, in fact, their purchase was now found to be a rich one.

The next day Buck Taylor rode up to the hiding-place of the gold, visited the claim, and then went to the cabin, after which he said, pleasantly:

"Well, pards, I am off."

"Where?"

"Well, I am going on a secret trail, and if you don't hear of me in six months, Bob Hatfield, just open this package, for it will tell you all."

"Good-by, pards, and I wish you, Hatfield, all happiness with your lovely bride, for she is lovely, and I only wish I could be at your wedding," and Buck Taylor rode away upon his return to the power of the renegade chief.

He had done his duty as he saw it, and was going back to face the consequences.

He arrived in the Indian village late one afternoon, and the renegade chief eagerly led him to his tepee.

"You have kept your pledge?"

"Yes."

"Well, you went to the mines?"

"I did, but you should have looked up the treasure sooner."

"What do you mean?" roared the renegade chief.

"I mean that there was a copy of these papers you hold."

"They were correct in everything, but some friend of the widow's held the copy, gave it to her, and she had gotten possession of the gold of her husband."

"Good God!"

"It is true; and you remember Bob Hatfield?"

"Yes."

"Well, he is to marry the widow, having bought her claim."

"Curses upon it! I feared I was delaying too long."

"I should have gone a year ago myself, and risked it, but I believed I alone held the clew to the hiding-place."

"Well, I went, so could do no more."

"No, Buck Taylor, you did your duty faithfully; but I have other work for you now, as Hassan must pay big ransom now to get his child back, yes, double what I intended!"

#### CHAPTER XXIX. THE TWO PARDS.

"WILL the Comanche Killer go on the trail with the Fighting Fox, who can not use his weapons?"

"The Fighting Fox will show him game he will wish to see?"

The question was addressed to Buck Taylor, some time after his return to the Indian village.

His coming back as he had, gave the Comanches confidence in him, and all knew that the chief had other work for him to do, and they began to regard him as an ally against his own race.

The Fighting Fox had sought him out in his tepee and put the question to him that opens this chapter.

Buck Taylor was cunning as an Indian, and felt that the warrior had some motive he would not make known, in wishing him to go with him.

But he decided to go, and be on his guard.

So the two quietly left the village and were soon at the rendezvous appointed by the pretended medicine-man.

Suddenly Buck Taylor saw the form of the supposed medicine-man rise before him, and he was ready to defend himself if need be.

But then he stood motionless while the medicine-man said:

"The Fighting Fox has done well to bring the Comanche Killer to me here."

"The Sunlight will breathe in his ears words that will show him what the Great Spirit would have him do."

And then to the amazement of Buck Taylor came the low words in English:

"I am your pard, Buckskin Sam, but the Fighting Fox believes me to be a medicine-man, and said he would bring you and the Little Lily here for me to kill."

"Where is the girl?"

"She has been ill, and can not come."

"I am in a plot now to rescue her, so do not expose your life remaining here."

"Go to the ranches, the settlements and the fort with all speed."

"You lead the soldiers here by the Northern Pass just ten nights from this, after midnight, for at dark I shall depart with the girl, and the pursuers must go into ambush at Red Cliffs, where the Rangers must be meet them, for I will take that trail."

"When the braves are off on my trail, and a hundred more are still away on a hunt, for word has come they will remain two weeks longer as game is plenty, you lead the soldiers to attack the village."

"Do you understand, Sam?"

"Yes, and will obey, for you know the situation best; but I came here to rescue you and Captain Hassan's little daughter."

"All right, pard, but you ride for life and do as I tell you, and more, the chief, Ka-noon-ka, Death Hand, is a white renegade, the Deadly Dick of the miners, and Diablo Dick of the Mexican Raiders."

Buckskin Sam gave a low whistle, and walked over to Fighting Fox.

"The Fighting Fox has done well; but I was warned in a dream not to kill to-night."

"I have told the Comanche Killer I will make him a great chief, if he will bring me the Little Lily here ten nights from this, that I may kill her."

But the Fighting Fox must bring her, and the Comanche Killer will meet him here, and then I will kill both as the Great Spirit commands."

"But when I strike the blow the Little Lily must be mounted upon a splendid horse, the best the Fighting Fox has in his corral, and both must die together."

"And there must be food for the Little Lily and the Comanche Killer to eat on their trail to the Spirit Land."

"Does the Fighting Fox understand?"

The disguised scout had spoken in the Comanche tongue, but so that Buck Taylor could hear every word he uttered, and understand that the warrior was to get Little Lily out of the village to that spot, which he could do more readily than could the white captive.

He also gave him to understand that Little Lily must have a horse, and food, so that the two could go well mounted and provisioned on their hard and long flight, should aught occur to keep the Rangers from being at the Red Cliffs to ambush the Indian pursuers.

Buck Taylor understood it all, and without a glance at Buckskin Sam, walked away from the spot with Fighting Fox, whose superstitious nature was wholly under the control of the pretended medicine-man, and who was wrought up to the highest pitch at the hope of becoming, through the death of the two white captives, a young girl and the Comanche Killer, a great chief.

#### CHAPTER XXX.

##### THE END OF THE LONG TRAIL.

WHEN Buck Taylor and Fighting Fox had disappeared, Buckskin Sam hastened away toward the canyon, where he had kept his horse in hiding the days he had been waiting the consummation of his plans.

He could not understand how it was that Buck Taylor was willing to return to the Indian village again; but he had perfect confidence in him, and so decided to follow out his plan of action.

The camp was reached, and soon after the well-rested horse of the Ranger Scout was going rapidly away upon his errand.

Buckskin Sam's first duty was to make for his own gallant Rangers, and send them to the Red Cliffs to go into hiding.

He explained that they were to go to the Red Cliffs by night, keep securely hidden by day, and have a close watch all the time for the coming of the fugitives so as to be ready to meet their pursuers.

This done they could cut over to the northward trails and ambush the returning band of Indian hunters.

Having made the officer in command of the Rangers in his stead, understand fully what wa



to be done, Buckskin Sam mounted upon a fresh horse rode for the fort nearest to the Indian country.

He sought the commandant and placed the situation fully before him, adding:

"Now, major, my Rangers will take care of the pursuers of Buck Taylor in his escape, and have a couple of days to go on and head off the returning hunters.

"This will wipe out the two bands away from the village, while I can guide a few companies of cavalry over the mountains, striking the Indian village in the rear, at the time that the pursuers are away after Buck, and the hunters are also absent.

"The force left in the village will hardly be over a couple of hundred fighting warriors, and as many troopers can, by surprising the camps, simply strike a blow the Comanches will never forget."

"Well, Buckskin Sam, I shall do all in my power to help you out, and though I cannot spare two hundred men, I will send four troops of forty men each, and you are to be the guide.

"Two days ago Captain Wingate went over toward the Rio Grande with three troops, which weakens my force just now."

"I'd say strike them, sir, if I only had one troop."

"Yes, and with your wild Texas Rangers it might do, though I do not wish to disparage our troopers in saying so, only you Texans are a terror to the red-skins, and I don't wonder.

"When do you say go?"

"To-night, sir."

"All right, so get what rest you can meanwhile, for you need it."

"I am never tired, Major McCook, when I am on a trail which I know has an end to it," said Buckskin Sam, and when the time came for starting, though he had taken no rest, he seemed as bright as any of the men that were to follow his guidance upon their perilous expedition to go into the heart of the Comanche country and attack a village of red-skins who would fight with desperation.

In the mean while matters in the Indian village were shaping to please Buck Taylor, and also Fighting Fox, who could only see in what was to happen brightest prospects for himself.

The prisoner had been sent for by the renegade chief, who held a conversation with him upon the subject of Belle Hassan's ransom.

"I will again trust you, Buck Taylor, to go away."

"You are to go upon the same terms as before, with the knowledge that if you do not return by such a day the girl is to be given up to torture."

"Should an armed force advance, ransom being refused, then the girl shall suffer."

"So state to her parents, and tell her that Dick Drummond is the one in whose power she is, and that I demand twenty thousand in gold for her ransom."

"When you return come alone with the money."

"I will have men on the watch for you, and will ride out to meet you on the prairie, carrying the girl with me, and having four warriors at my back, so that you may not prove false to me."

"Remember the day I set for the girl's torture, and do not shave it too close, for before you had but twenty-four hours' leeway."

"Now start when you please, and when I have the money you and the girl are free."

"I will depart to-night, chief," was Buck Taylor's response, and he started off in search of Fighting Fox, who, with his wife had Belle Hassan in keeping.

They had not been unkind to her, in fact had done much to help the little captive in their rude way; but the warrior looked forward to seeing her die at the hands of the medicine-chief, only for his advancement.

As to Buck Taylor, he supposed that the cunning of the supposed medicine-man and himself were leading him into a trap, believing that when the two captives reached the rendezvous together they must die, and little knowing that the one he believed an Indian was even then guiding a soldier band against the Indian village.

"The Fighting Fox will see that the Little Lily is there," said the warrior, and he kept his word.

He first rode there upon his best horse, carrying with him a bag of provisions.

Then he bade his squaw leave the village by one pass with the little captive, and return alone by another, telling her that the medicine-chief demanded the girl's presence in the woods, to find through her certain herbs.

Then Fighting Fox made his way to the ren-

dezvous, found his squaw there with Little Lily, and sending the former home just at nightfall, awaited the coming of the medicine-man and Buck Taylor.

The latter soon arrived, and he was well-mounted, armed and equipped for the trail.

As he rode up, the Fighting Fox in very bad English told him that the medicine-man would soon arrive.

Buck Taylor made no reply, but threw himself upon the warrior, and at once a desperate struggle began.

But it lasted only a minute, and the Fighting Fox had fought his last battle, though from his lips had rung out several wild, fierce cries of warning that he knew would reach the ears of the guard.

"Now, Little Lily, we must be away for home."

"I am sorry you had to see me kill that Indian, but it could not be helped."

"Come, this is your horse, and we will have to ride as fast as possible."

Buck Taylor placed the little maiden in the saddle, leaped upon his own horse, and led the way down the trail.

He knew the country pretty well, flanked the sentinels at the ridge pass, and reached the prairie soon after midnight.

That he was hotly pursued he knew, for as there were but three trails he could take, he knew that bands of warriors would be sent by each one.

But he reached the prairie some distance ahead of his pursuers and halted to give his horses a chance to blow, and water from a stream, the last they would cross for a long while.

Just as the dawn rose the red cliffs came in sight, and back over the prairie the light now showed the pursuers, fully a hundred in number.

The nearest one was a quarter of a mile away and the others were scattered out for over a mile, according to the speed of their horses.

They had followed like hounds, rather than human beings, in spite of the darkness, and a wild yell went up, as they saw the fugitives.

Buck Taylor called Belle to his side, and his face was turned upon the Red Cliffs somewhat anxiously.

He had not pressed his horses, but the Indians had urged their ponies hard, and, even should there be no ambush at the Red Cliffs, as he had planned with Buckskin Sam, he felt that the animals would keep well in the lead of their pursuers.

Still he hoped that the ambushers were there.

Soon they rode into the long pass through the hill, and, as he did so, though he saw no one, he heard a voice call out:

"Push straight on, Buck, and let them all get into the canyon in following you."

"Have no fear now, Little Pard, for we are safe," he said, and Belle replied promptly:

"I am not afraid when you are with me."

So on they sped, and on came the pursuers.

They entered the canyon, and when nearly all had gotten into the trap, a rattle of rifle-shots rung out on either side and many a brave fell from his saddle.

"Wait here, Little Pard," cried Buck Taylor, and wheeling his horse he went back like the wind and led the Rangers of Buckskin Sam back upon the now terrified and flying warriors.

It was a terrible lesson the Comanches got there that day in the Red Cliffs Pass, and while the wounded Rangers went on toward Soldiers' Retreat Ranch, little Belle with them, Buck Taylor led the gallant riders on to head off the band of red-skin hunters.

There two men were ambushed, and dealt a fearful blow, and when the fugitive warriors reached their village, they found only death and havoc there, for the troopers had swept down upon them, guided by Buckskin Sam, and to this day the Comanches recall with horror the remembrance of how their pale-face foes avenged the raid of their chief, Death Hand, upon the Texas rancheros.

As one from the grave Belle was welcomed back by her loving parents, and that Buck Taylor and Buckskin Sam, the rescuers, ever found the warmest welcome at Soldier's Retreat Ranch, goes without saying, and in all their daring deeds of later years, they recalled always the rescue of the Little Lily of the Comanches as the noblest of their acts.

THE END.

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